Commentary

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Naked Unto Our Enemies
Angelo M. Codevilla

The Jihad Against the Jews
Martin Kramer

How Good Was Leonard Bernstein?
Terry Teachout

WHAT TO DO ABOUT EDUCATION

The Universities / Gertrude Himmelfarb

The Schools / Chester E. Finn, Jr.

The Secret of Jewish Continuity
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The Left vs. Free Speech
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Megan's Law & the "New York Times"
Midge Decter

Books in Review: Adam B. Ulam / Alan Mintz / Tod Lindberg / David Guaspari / Charles Horner

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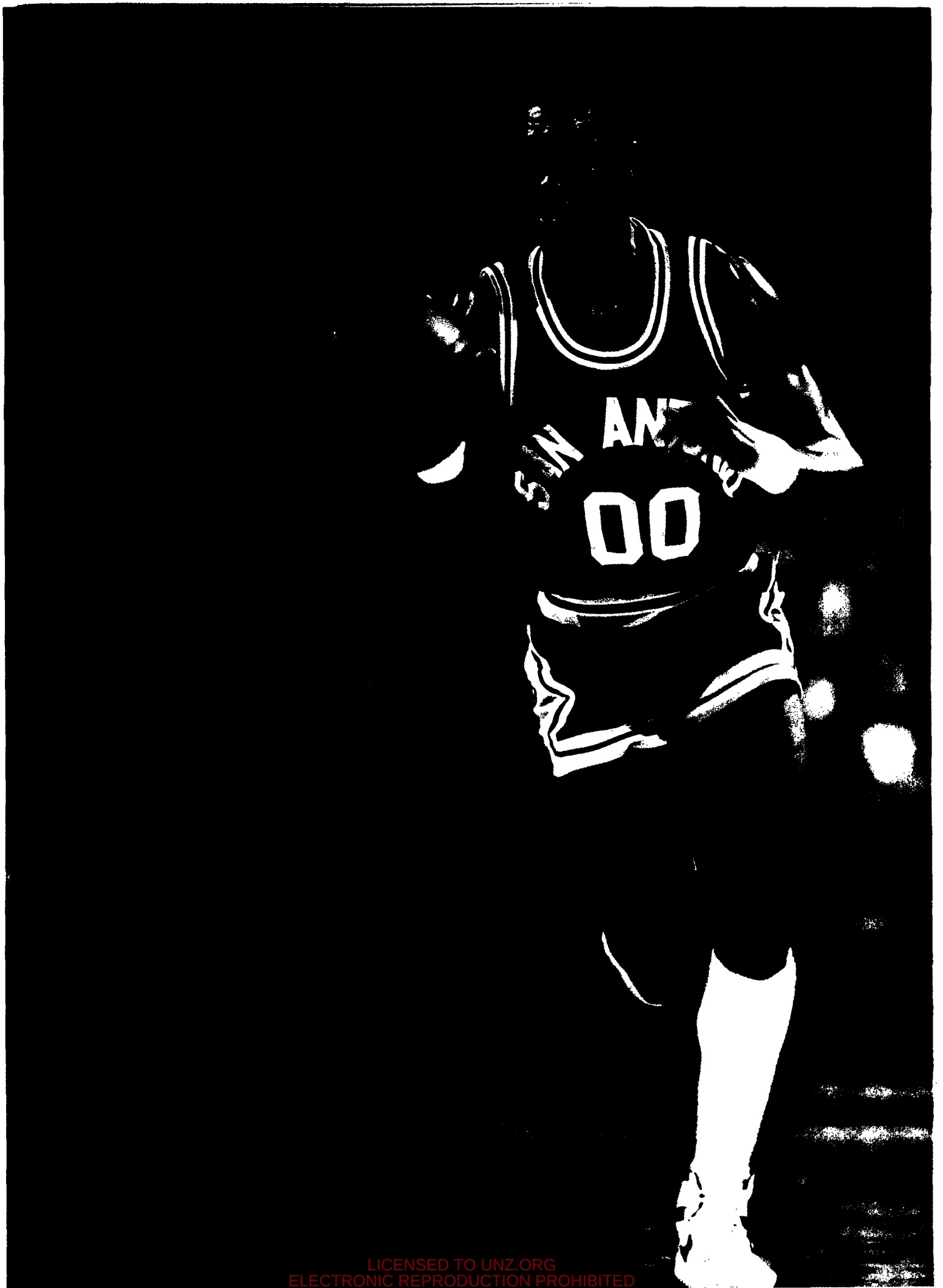

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Commentary®

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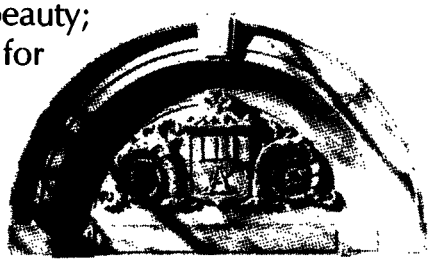

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Letters from Readers

"Land for No Peace"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I agree with everything Douglas J. Feith says in his "Land for No Peace" [June], and reading it is enough to chill the heart of any sane person, . . . Israeli or not.

It makes one wonder where the Israelis who made the agreement with Yasir Arafat have been all these years since the break-up of the Ottoman empire, when Arabs could not get along with Arabs; when agreements they made with each other were never kept for more than three years. Nor am I able to comprehend why Israel would think that Arafat, who has never kept his word before or hesitated to say something he did not mean, could be trusted to keep it now.

Israel is also being forced into making an agreement with Hafez al-Assad of Syria, another man of his word who will do whatever he has to do to get what he wants and then renege on it, as he did with the Lebanese-Israeli agreement. . . .

It took the Arab world 27 years to consider talking to Israel after the Six-Day War. Why the rush to sign an agreement now? There may appear to be many reasons, but are they any more valid than those that led to the Arafat debacle?

At a meeting many years ago with the Christian-Lebanese General Haddad in southern Lebanon, my late husband, Max I. Dimont, asked Haddad if he was surprised that the Christian world had not come to his aid. . . . Haddad's answer was:

> Not really. The Western world refuses to believe that the Arab will sign any agreement or say anything he has to say that serves his purpose, knowing full well that he has no intention of keeping any commitment he makes if it does not fit in with his belief and desires.

Although at the time I thought this was a rather harsh statement, Arafat has proved him correct—as have all the other Arab countries that make agreements and break them when it suits their purpose.

ETHEL DIMONT
St. Louis, Missouri

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Douglas J. Feith worries that territorial withdrawal would lead to "physical insecurity and a hair-trigger national-defense posture." But 45 years of similar anxieties have led to Israel's having defensive capabilities that are among the world's finest. Barring the development of weapons of mass destruction (with credible delivery systems) by its enemies, Israel will continue to be a respected military power, West Bank or not.

Assuming the worst-case scenario of territorial compromise by invasion, it is "hardly an inconceivable eventuality" that the U.S. would fully assist Israel in repelling the attackers. In such a case, international support would be *more* forthcoming in the context of a recent Israeli withdrawal from occupied lands.

More disturbing, however, is Mr. Feith's talk of national rights. He states that, like the U.S., Israel ". . . is an idea," and that there is more at stake (i.e., Zionism) ". . . in the negotiations than peace and physical security. . . ." While mentioning the U.S. Constitution, Mr. Feith neglects to identify the "idea" upon which America's Founding is based: individual liberty. For Americans, freedom is more important than peace, since the latter can still be obtained in a totalitarian state. Peace without individual freedom is slavery; fury and revolution are the inevitable consequences.

How then can Israel adhere to Zionism within the "liberal rule of law," yet condone an armed occupation? I am dismayed that Mr. Feith's "fulfillment of the Zionist dream" might include continuation of the status quo, whereby hundreds of thousands of people are deprived of many of their occupiers' liberties. As such, if the universal principle of liberty is to be subordinated to the more parochial principle of Zionism, then the Zionists will continue to be the objects of blind, visceral hatred *ad infinitum*. . . .

PETER BLOCK
Pittsford, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Douglas J. Feith does not go far enough in his assertion that fear of the demographic bomb constituted by the Arabs of Judea, Sa-

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maria, and Gaza logically implies unilateral Israeli withdrawal from those areas, which in turn sends the Arabs a message that they need pay no significant price for those withdrawals because they will receive them as a gift anyway.

In point of fact, the demographic threat represented by the Arab populations on *both* sides of the Green Line implies much more than that: the long-term nonviability of Israel as a state both democratic and Jewish. Just as Mr. Feith rightly mentions the inspiration that the Arab world draws from the wearing-down of the Crusader kingdom in the Holy Land, I would suggest that Israel's enemies can derive much comfort from the fact that at current birth rates the Arabs inside Israel double their numbers every 18 years while the Jews take 45 years to accomplish the same thing. It guarantees that time will convert the only Jewish state into one more Arab one.

Israeli demographers such as Roberto Bachi and Sergio Della Pergola have repeatedly noted that the substantially higher birth rate of the Arabs will make the Jews behind the Green Line a minority in their currently Jewish state some time in the next century, no matter how many Russian Jews arrive. So long as the Jews of Israel maintain an annual natural-population increase (1.6 percent) of less than half that of the Arabs (4 percent), the ultimate triumph of Arab over Jewish sovereignty is assured regardless of how the border is drawn, and each 100,000 new immigrants only postpones that day by one year.

Were Israel's leaders, past and present, serious about dealing with this threat to the Jewish state, they could have included population transfer as an integral part of any acceptable settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Whatever difficulties this might present today, it will be far more difficult to implement in the future. The longstanding substitution of howls of "racism" for rational discussion of the consequences of *not* removing the Arabs from within whatever Israel's future borders may be, offers little hope that the Israelis will preserve their state. They will, instead, voluntarily sacrifice it on the altar of a distorted concept of egalitarian democracy that their enemies do not reciprocate and that is irrelevant to the Middle East. It would seem that thus far the "Zionist heritage" in which, Mr. Feith writes, the Israelis must "find the conviction and fortitude to defend themselves" from their enemies without, has not yet indoctrinated them with the will to save their state from its resident branch of that enemy within.

ZALMAN GAIBEL
Chicago, Illinois

DOUGLAS J. FEITH writes:

The phenomenon of unreliability highlighted in Ethel Dimont's letter is by no means limited to Arafat, Assad, or the Arab world. When a democratic and a nondemocratic party conclude peace and arms-control agreements with one another, it is common for the former to find that the latter has violated its undertakings. The democratic side has domestic institutions—e.g., a parliament, an independent judiciary, a free press—that help ensure treaty compliance on its own part. When the nondemocratic party, unconstrained by such institutions, chooses to ignore obligations, the democratic party generally finds that it lacks good options for remedying the problem. This was the case after the U.S. government signed numerous arms-control agreements with the Soviet Union, which the latter violated materially and systematically. And this appears to be the case with Israel in its dealings with its nondemocratic negotiating partners.

Regarding Peter Block's letter: the scenario I said was "hardly an inconceivable eventuality" was additional political successes by Islamic fundamentalists in Israel's region. In that event, I believe Israel's strategic position could change for the worse (especially, for example, if the Egyptian regime fell to the Islamists) and territorial concessions to the PLO could prove more dangerous than they appear to many at present. As for Mr. Block's faith in Israel's rescue by the United States, Golda Meir disposed of this point with the observation: "By the time you get here, we won't be here." Mr. Block asks, how can Israel "condone an armed occupation?" This question strikes me as peculiar. The territories are "occupied" because Israel was subjected in 1967 to an aggressive attack by its neighbors. While it would clearly be desirable for Israel and its neighbors to resolve the status of Israel and the territories once and for all by

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mutual consent in the context of honest and sensible peace treaties, Israel, in the meantime, must secure itself as best it can, even if this means preserving the legal status quo in the territories. It is ahistorical, to say the least, for Mr. Block to suggest that the "occupation" accounts for the "blind, visceral hatred" to which the Zionists have been subjected; Arab anti-Zionism was born long before 1967.

I do not agree with Zalman Gaibel that high Arab birth rates will inevitably render the Jews a minority in Israel. Single-factor analyses and straight-lining of current trends into the future are notoriously unreliable bases for policy planning. Predictions in the late 1960's about the Arab "demographic bomb" proved false because they failed to foresee, for example, Arab emigration related to the oil boom in the 1970's and Jewish immigration related to the collapse of the Soviet empire. In any event, forced population transfer is considered a wildly unrealistic (not to say morally repugnant) option by the vast majority of Israelis. Israel's security problems are real, complex, and certain to persist well into the future; they cannot be solved through escape into either peace fantasies or transfer fantasies.

Dwight Macdonald

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her article on Michael Wreszin's biography of Dwight Macdonald ["The Politics of Dissent," July], Gertrude Himmelfarb writes: "Mary McCarthy's 'Portrait of the Intellectual as a Yale Man,' written in 1942, gives us a barely fictionalized young Macdonald who presages the Macdonald of later years." As a marginal and very junior member of the intellectual circles around Macdonald's *Politics* and *Partisan Review* in the late 1940's, I recall that it was common knowledge that McCarthy's model was John Chamberlain. Miss Himmelfarb was also a member of these circles, so her error is surprising. She knew Macdonald personally much better than I ever did, so it is also surprising that she ignores the clear lack of resemblance between most of the traits McCarthy ascribes to her character, including physical appearance, and Macdonald. It is all the more surprising in that she clearly reread the McCarthy story from which she quotes directly. If it is any consolation to her, Christopher Hitchens made the same mistake in the *London Review of Books* of June 23, placing the false equation between Macdonald and the McCarthy character at the very beginning of his review.

John Chamberlain started out as a left-wing journalist, became a writer for the Luce publications, wrote a book called *A Farewell to Reform*, and eventually edited the *Freeman*, a solidly right-wing journal that was the precursor of William F. Buckley, Jr.'s *National Review*. Dwight Macdonald's career followed exactly the opposite course: he began as a writer for Luce, went on to contribute to obscure radical periodicals, and ultimately founded his own in *Politics*. Perhaps Miss Himmelfarb's error is owing to the fact that today she sees Chamberlain's career and that of McCarthy's character—at odds here with McCarthy herself—as a sober and responsible one in contrast to the vain utopian leftism for which she censures Macdonald.

I think it is safe to say that Miss Himmelfarb and Hitchens are not exactly ideological soul-mates. Yet both of them, presumably for quite different reasons, pay little attention to Macdonald's strong anti-Communism. Miss Himmelfarb mentions a few of Macdonald's criticisms of the Soviet Union in passing, Hitchens ignores them altogether. Yet Macdonald wrote a book on Henry Wallace and made speeches against him during Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign on the ticket of the Progressive party, which had notoriously been organized by the American Communist party. In the same year, Macdonald put out the largest issue of *Politics*, devoted chiefly to the exposure of Soviet totalitarianism, including a comprehensive bibliography at a time when Sovietology had yet to be established in the universities.

The next year Macdonald, McCarthy, and Robert Lowell attended sessions of the famous—or infamous—Waldorf Peace Conference in order to ask probing questions of Soviet cultural officials about writers and artists, many of them Jewish, who had been victims of Stalin's purges. A few years later, at the height of the cold war and the hot Korean war, Macdonald announced that he "chose the West" while in no way renouncing criticism of its manifest injustices and deficiencies.

Gertrude Himmelfarb and Christopher Hitchens pass over all this, although it had a considerable influence on politically-minded young people inclined to the Left such as myself. In fairness, they may be reflecting Wreszin's lack of emphasis: Macdonald's son Michael remarked to me the other day that he thought Wreszin had somewhat underplayed his father's hatred of Stalinism.

DENNIS WRONG
Princeton, New Jersey

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB writes:

Dennis Wrong makes much of the one sentence in my review prefacing a quotation from Mary McCarthy's story, "Portrait of the Intellectual as a Yale Man," which I associate with Dwight Macdonald. It was "common knowledge," he says, that John Chamberlain was the model for that "Yale man"; if he (Wrong) knew that at the time, surely I should have as well. As a historian, I am wary of half-a-century-old memories (and rumors). I prefer to rely on the recent authorized biography of Mary McCarthy by Carol Brightman, who describes that character (Jim Barnett in the story) as "reassembled from bits and pieces of a half-dozen men—Chamberlain, yes, but chiefly as 'a good-looking clothes hanger' (McCarthy), along with telltale tinctures of Dwight Macdonald, Malcolm Cowley, and Robert Cantwell." If it was chiefly his appearance that recalled Chamberlain, other aspects of his life and work, according to Brightman—the kinds of articles he wrote for *Destiny* (i.e., *Fortune*), and his unsuccessful efforts to write a book after leaving the magazine—clearly derived from Macdonald. Certainly the passage I quoted on his "mind and character" is quintessentially Macdonald.

Mr. Wrong's account of the later careers of Chamberlain and Macdonald is irrelevant, since McCarthy's story, as I pointed out in my article, was published in 1942, before the two had diverged so dramatically. (Chamberlain was editor of the *Freeman* from 1950 to 1952.) He attributes my "error" to my preference for Chamberlain's politics over Macdonald's; I can only assure him that I have not given a thought to Chamberlain or his politics for more decades than I like to remember.

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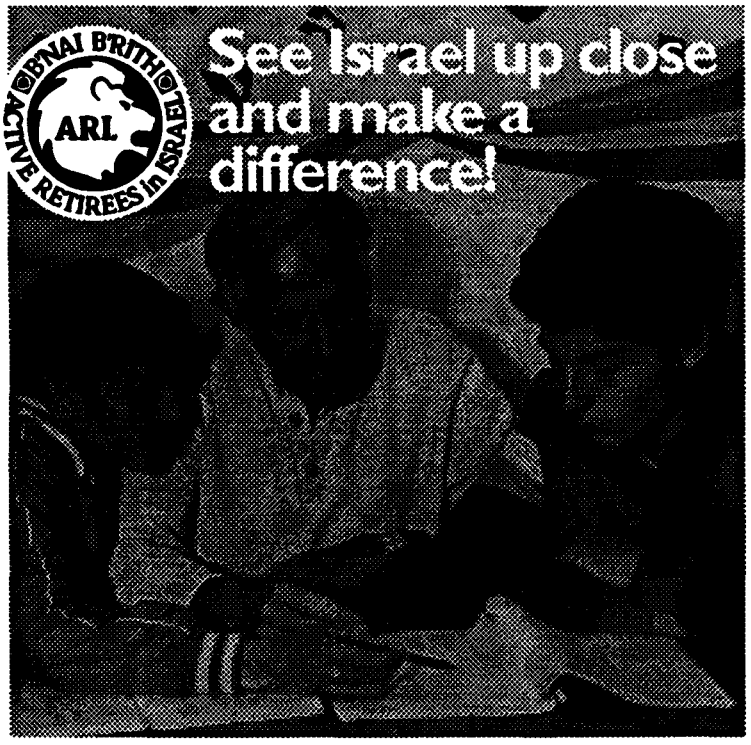

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Mr. Wrong also accuses me of slighting Macdonald's anti-Communism. I do, in fact, speak of it several times, and if I do not make as much of it as Mr. Wrong would like, it is because, in Macdonald's circles, anti-Communism was a given; he was hardly a lone crusader in that cause. Mr. Wrong says that it was Macdonald's anti-Communism that inspired young people like himself. But he might have taken his inspiration from the many other ex-Trotskyites, Social Democrats, and anti-Communist liberals who contributed to *Partisan Review*, the *New Leader*, COMMENTARY, *Dissent*, and *Encounter* in those years. What distinguished Macdonald from most of them was not his anti-Communism but his anti-Americanism. As I made clear (and Michael Wreszin did as well), that often led him to equate the evils of Communism and capitalism. Certainly during the 1950's and 60's it was his animus against American culture, society, and politics that dominated his writing and political activities.

The more notable fact about Macdonald, which Mr. Wrong does not mention at all, was his adamant opposition to World War II—not on pacifist grounds but because he regarded capitalism as insufficiently superior to Nazism to justify the war. Unlike most of his friends on the Left, he maintained this position throughout the war and afterward, never, so far as I know, regretting or recanting it. If Macdonald did have "considerable influence," as Mr. Wrong says, over young people like himself, I sincerely hope he did not influence them in this respect.

The Dietary Laws

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read with concern Leon R. Kass's article, "Why the Dietary Laws?" [June]. The observation that vegetarians refrain from meat indiscriminately and thus "violate the Jewish dietary laws" fails to consider that vegetarians refrain from bloodshed and violence. Would that not be the best way to maintain our separation from animals? Are the particular rules, restrictions, and prohibitions around meat-eating not obvious in their disapproval of this human desire for flesh?

Furthermore, given modern factory-farming methods of raising animals (clearly a violation of the injunction against causing pain to living creatures); given the devastating global impact of rainforest destruction on grazing cattle (violating the injunction against purposeless destruction); and given the detrimental health impact of too much meat, chicken, and fish in our diet (violating the injunction to preserve life), would the act of eating not be more sanctified by vegetarian practice?

SUSAN KALEV

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have heard many justifications for the eating of meat, but none as sophisticated as that of Leon R. Kass. He cogently argues that the Jewish dietary laws still have significance; by discriminating between kosher and non-kosher animals we are imitating God and commemorating God's creation, since God made distinctions in creating the world.

In contrast, Mr. Kass argues, vegetarians do not make distinctions, since they do not discriminate between animals that might and might not be edible. One might add that vegetarians who are concerned about *kashrut* do not have an opportunity to distinguish between milk and meat dishes and silverware. However, vegetarians do discriminate in some important ways: between a diet that is not based on violence, that is consistent with human physiology, that does minimum harm to the environment, that best shares resources with others, and a diet that has the opposite characteristics.

With regard to remembering the creation of the earth, what better way than to adopt the vegetarian diet that God gave to humanity in the first chapter of Genesis, a diet that does minimum harm to the other creatures and the world that God created?

While Mr. Kass presents an excellent summary of the anthropological sequence of eating, he fails to consider recent changes in livestock agriculture which have led to conditions that seem to be inconsistent with basic Jewish values today:

• While Judaism emphasizes compassion for animals, animals today are raised for food under cruel conditions, in crowded cells, where they are denied fresh air, exercise, and any emotional stimulation.

• While Judaism mandates us to be careful about preserving our health and our lives, flesh-centered diets have been linked to heart disease, several forms of cancer, and other diseases.

• While Judaism stresses that we are to share our bread with hungry people, over 70 percent of the grain grown in the United States is fed to animals destined for slaughter, and twenty million people die annually because of hunger and its effects.

• While Judaism teaches that "the earth is the Lord's" and that we are to be partners with God in preserving the world and in seeing that the earth's resources are properly used, flesh-centered diets require huge amounts of land, water, energy, and other resources, and result in extensive pollution, soil erosion, and threats to tropical rain forests and other habitats.

• While Judaism stresses that we must seek and pursue peace and that violence results from unjust conditions, flesh-centered diets, by wasting valuable resources, help to perpetuate the widespread hunger and poverty that eventually lead to instability and war.

I hope that Mr. Kass's thoughtful article will help to start a dialogue on ethical issues related to our diets. Perhaps this question can further that goal: in view of strong Jewish mandates to be compassionate to animals, preserve health, help feed the hungry, protect the environment, conserve resources, and seek and pursue peace, and the very negative effects flesh-centered diets have in each of these areas, shouldn't committed Jews switch to vegetarian diets?

RICHARD H. SCHWARTZ

Staten Island, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Leon R. Kass's article on the dietary laws is a *tour de force* which overlooks the fact that Jewish tradition does not suggest that the eating of meat was ordained in order to "elevate" the stature of the human race by attaching meat consumption to the category of other distinctions, such as that between "holy" and "profane." On the contrary, Jewish tradition for millennia consistently suggests that the eating of meat is a concession without dignity or elevation. In a discussion in the Talmud (*Berakhot* 35a), the rabbis lay down the principle that the seven foods of the biblical land of Israel—olives, grapes, wheat, barley,

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pomegranates, figs, and honey—should be the standard for the blessing of foods.

For a food to deserve a blessing, it should be pleasurable; it should be one of the seven species (subject to the obligation of first fruits); it should be offered on the altar; it should have food value; and it should have dignity. When the question of meat arises, it is pointed out that eating meat may be pleasurable and have food value, but that "meat has no dignity." And indeed, no special blessing for the consumption of meat was ever created.

The Talmud states (*Hulin* 84a), "Man should not teach his son to eat meat," and the Hebrew word for meat (*basar*) was explained by the rabbis as an acronym—the letter *bet*: shame; the letter *sin*: corruption; the letter *resh*: worms. Consumption of meat hardly sounds like a recipe for spiritual elevation.

Furthermore, Jewish mystical time is rooted in the vegetarian tradition, as Rabbi Avraham Kook formulated it in his booklet, *Vegetarianism and a Vision of World Peace.* Jewish mystical time arises in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve as vegetarians and concludes with a vegetarian messianic world.

It is true, as Mr. Kass point out, that there is a decisive difference between the world in Eden and the post-Noachic world. Martin Buber stated that the natural world is created with a blessing but the world after the Flood is created with a curse. Noah's descent (not ascent) is associated with a conclusive separation from nature, the knowledge of war, the eating of meat, and God's weary acceptance of man's corruption.

ROBERTA KALECHOFSKY
Jews for Animal Rights
Marblehead, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Reading COMMENTARY is always interesting and occasionally the magazine hits the head on the nail with unexpected force, as in the June issue in which Leon R. Kass tells us the reasons for the dietary laws and Peter L. Berger ["Furtive Smokers—and What They Tell Us About America"] questions the kind of society we have become. Mr. Berger notes that, increasingly, individual rights are subordinated to a collective "good," which is "ever more amply defined . . . , increasingly codified in law . . . ,

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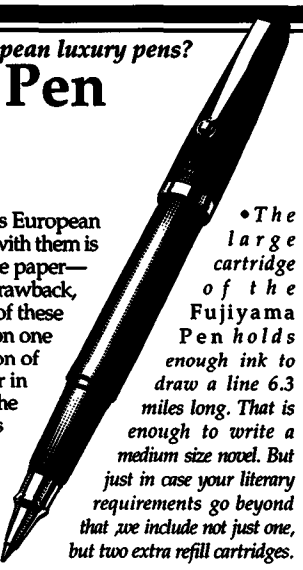

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backed by the awesome power of modern government." Mr. Kass tells us that something needed to be done to restrain the "boundless appetites of human beings" lest the tribe perish in wickedness.

Before the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issues rules to restrain smokers, it jiggers the numbers to "show" that downstream smoke harms the community. In this the EPA is akin to Leviticus, which would restrain us from preferring a blood-sausage sandwich to granola. The splitting of hairs by those in power is never an exercise of reason but of power, always, of course, for the "common good," but really to subjugate the individual. Mr. Kass answers Mr. Berger: we have become an "Old Testament" society. We are high-tech and relentless—issuing thousands of chapters of Bureaucraticus, year after year. We can identify one unclean particle in a billion clean ones. When we believe pork is unclean, or downstream smoke will kill us, or the sky is heating up, some people are on the way to getting us to believe anything that suits their agenda. The New Class is the oldest class of all.

JONAS DOVYDENAS
Lenox, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I believe that Leon R. Kass's search for truth in the ancient myths of men is mistaken. Mr. Kass argues that in studying the dietary laws of Leviticus, we will be closer to the God of the Chosen People. But revealed truth, as such, must be suspect, and not followed on faith by modern man. The old belief, that because God handed down the Ten Commandments they possess meaning, no longer follows. We no longer fear the myth of Judgment Day, nor do we much believe in God any more, save in foxholes. That I can say that I am more certain that my hand exists than I am of God is the mark of modernity. Nor can I know what a God is other than to look at the world and say He cannot be as written in these myths.

Pestilence, war, and famine tell that the mythological God of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament is not all-powerful, all-good, all-knowing. Given this pagan view of the world, religious teachings must be looked at by man with an eye toward what he now knows and has earned: modern liberalism. The ancient prejudices of race, religion, sex, and gender, so perfectly recorded in ancient religious texts, and so well-perpetuated today, will no longer do. Precedence and practiced wisdom must give us pause, and we would be hard-pressed to follow a better set of ethics than that of the Ten Commandments. But whether these are natural or positive laws matters. To believe in superstitious myths means to make these myths the final value: hence the studying of the dietary laws of Leviticus for what they might reveal. But modern man has no such easy exit: God is silent and man is his own master.

JOHN M. BLACK III
Woodside, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Leon R. Kass's "Why the Dietary Laws?" makes a fascinating, and serious, point about the fundamental role, often both destructive and salutary, of eating habits in human and especially in Jewish life. The preoccupation with food—that is, the partaking of the "right" kind of food—may be greater among Jews because of the religious prescriptions and proscriptions encoded in divine law. Despite the article's title, the actual question, which is posed further into the text, centers on "Why *these* dietary laws?" What are the reasons for the laws of *kashrut* as laid down in the book of Leviticus?

In this exegetical exercise the author pulls together disparate threads from the biblical text and weaves them into a coherent form which ultimately confirms the essential wisdom of God's laws. Far be it from me to put it in doubt, either. But the article has also inspired me to revive an old, favorite theory of mine. . . .

The problem is two-pronged: the purpose of the laws and the criterion applied in defining what is kosher and what is non-kosher (*treif*). The first part is clear: the essential purpose is the separation and holiness of God's chosen people. The old saying, "Man is what he eats," may be a play on words, but it contains an essential truth in more than one sense. The real problem centers on the criterion applied in determining which animals are forbidden and which are permitted to be consumed.

As Mr. Kass, following Leviticus, states, God's decision is based on whether an animal is clean or unclean. So far, so good. But the next question that comes to mind is, what makes one animal clean and another unclean? The classifications in Leviticus display the redactor's (whether human or divine, it matters not for the moment) acute eye for detail and poetic imagination, but they also betray a rather anthropocentric view of the animal kingdom. Why would God create unclean things in the first place, and if it is respect for life that is the motive, why would He permit the eating of any animal flesh? Mr. Kass does not neglect to address both of these aspects but confines himself to the biblical text for answers.

It may be useful, however, to . . . take into account the wider historical, cultural, and economic context within which the dietary practices of the Jews evolved. This presumes, of course, that the practices and customs did evolve over an extended period of time, necessitated by the vagaries of nomadic life, and that the subsequent legislative act placed the stamp of divine law on ancient, well-established customs.

Mr. Kass does mention earlier practices—for instance, the abstaining from what is now called filet mignon, with sinew attached, as going back to Jacob, and he recalls the wonderful legend of the origin of this custom. We know that Jacob's father, Isaac, did not "keep kosher"—and presumably neither did Abraham. However, Jacob's clan of herdsmen and shepherds, wandering in the desert, partially in flight from various people who had it in for them, and essentially steering clear of contact with the peoples of the plains, could well have developed other gustatory habits that, in altered form perhaps, subsequently became the dietary laws.

In fact, if we strip away the layers of interpretations and attributive meanings and expose the bare bones (no pun intended), it becomes apparent that, for instance, the types of meat that are allowed come from animals associated with a pastoral or grazing economy. This is not to suggest a crude Marxist-atheist analytical model of economic determinism. But, if we set aside for a moment areas of overlap and blurring, it becomes obvious: that which is *treif* is exclusively associated with other economies—agricultural, hunting, even deep-sea fishing.

Does it not make sense that

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God, being all-knowing and wise, should be keenly aware that to live detached from the nations and to be holy, His people would have to be economically autonomous and productively self-sufficient? He would also know that trade inevitably creates contact between cultures and contact entails cultural diffusion; it is no secret that for millennia ideas have traveled the trade routes of the earth to be exchanged, along with goods, at far-flung trading centers.

One other fact, which bridges the time between Jacob and the Exodus, can be cited in support of the hypothesis of an economic origin of the laws of *kashrut* and their basis in pastoral, nomadic life. Moses the Lawgiver came from the tribe of Levi, the descendants of Jacob who were not enslaved in Egypt but continued to live as shepherds and herdsmen in Goshen. It may be reasonably presumed that the Levites preserved other "old ways," including certain dietary habits. So when Moses (and God), after the Exodus from Egypt, set out to mold the mass of ex-slaves into a distinct people, the centuries-old customs, evolved in the days of Jacob and preserved among the Levites, were ready to be invoked, be stamped with divine approval, with some elaboration no doubt, and become the law that made economic self-sufficiency possible once again.

Of all the speculations that abound, an economic basis of the laws of *kashrut* seems more plausible than many, and it certainly makes God's decrees appear less baffling and less seemingly arbitrary and whimsical.

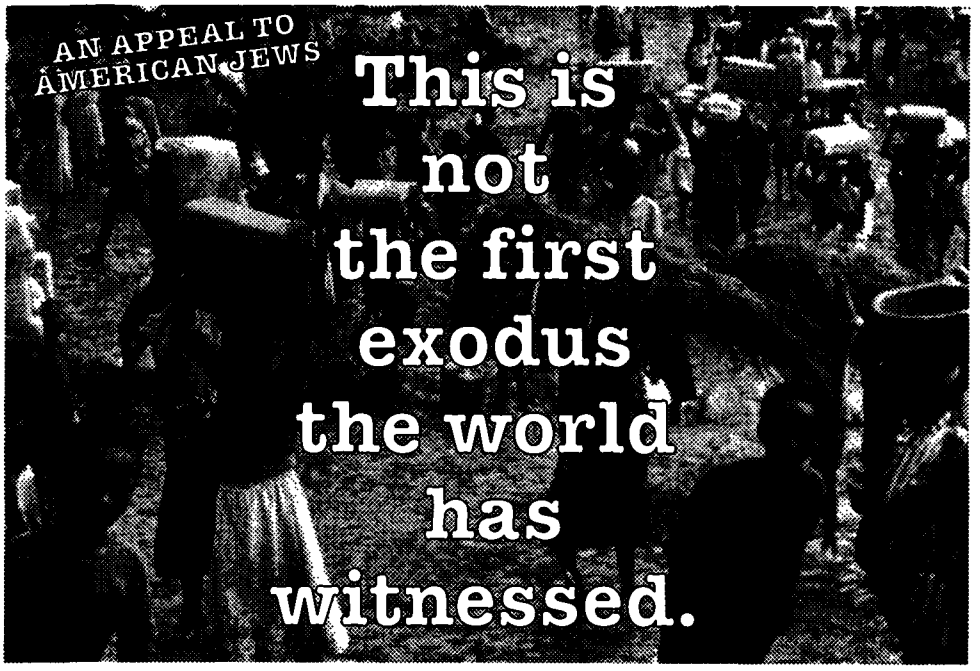
BRIGITTE M. GOLDSTEIN
Highland Park, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Leon R. Kass's demonstration of a rationale for dietary laws from principles of philosophic anthropology deserves great praise, both for its erudition and for its polemical significance. As he notes, the rules of *kashrut* are central *in* Torah and central *to* Judaism, but they have been replaced by "so-called ethics." His recovery of the centrality of the dietary laws to Judaism is therefore the necessary first step for recovering the true ethical teaching of the Torah and for demonstrating why any ethics aiming to produce autonomous human beings is an ethics that destroys order, life, and form. . . .

If I understand his analysis, Mr. Kass has ingeniously sought the "formal" causes (in contrast to the "efficient" causes) of the dietary laws, and in having done so, he has demonstrated why they were central in the Torah: they are the vehicle for the perfection of our nature as human beings. What makes us human is not simply that we are thinking beings, but that we are meat-eating beings—animals with a taste for blood—who are capable of placing restraints on our behavior, even those related to our physical survival. We perfect our natures in exercising these restraints because, in doing so, we discover that it is possible to ascend beyond the physical, to become holy, which is to say, to become ethical.

In recovering the centrality of the dietary laws, Mr. Kass has challenged the centrality of what he refers to as "so-called ethics." I surmise that he would include under the category of "pseudo-ethicists" those Jews who profess that the prophets are more important than Moses, and all people who believe that the Torah is simply one teaching among a multitude of other ethical "systems"—that is, cultural relativists such as multiculturalists.



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. . . They share a common assumption: that our ethical nature, as humans, is grounded in some notion of "spirit"—whether it is manifested in faith *per se* or in conscience or in history and culture. If I read Mr. Kass's argument correctly, he seems to be indicating that Paul, in denying the obligatory nature of the dietary laws, was the "spiritual" father of these "so-called" ethical teachings.

But what kind of ethics can be deduced from spirit? The answer, I believe, can be fashioned from an examination of a system that functions with the distinction between body and spirit, but which does not reject the physical elements entirely. That system is cannibalism, which the Torah treats as an abomination. The ethics derived from cannibalism rest on the assumption that by eating the body of a superior person, the individual incorporates the dead person's superior qualities and thereby makes himself better than he was before. It is the spirit, when ingested with the body as meat, that transforms—"improves"—a person's nature. But what is the improvement? It makes the person more capable of killing and ingesting others! Is there any reason to wonder why the Torah treats cannibalism as an abomination and not just as a "different" cultural expression?

While he does not do so explicitly, I believe Mr. Kass's analysis leads him to the conclusion that cannibalism's notion of elevation or improvement and the ethics of those who have replaced the dietary laws with some spiritual idea about the grounds of ethics share a common assumption: that a poetically defined notion of spirituality can bring about an authentic transformation of a human's nature. The Torah, and I believe Mr. Kass as well, would argue that such a transformation depends on a re-creation, by humans, of our natures as humans. That is to say, it depends on a miracle, one equivalent to the creation of the world, one that would eliminate the more vicious elements in human nature. We are still waiting for this to occur.

By uncovering the mystery of the dietary laws, and revealing their inextricable link to the ethical grounds of our humanity, Mr. Kass seems to be claiming that any ethical teaching grounded in spirit must be able to refute the principle of holiness provided in the Torah. It can only do so by giving a complete account—not simply a functional one—of why things have the "form" or "look" they have, that is, the ways in which all "things" are separate and separated from one another. No science based solely on determining the "efficient" causes of events has done so. Nor can it do so.

The ethical teachings based on some notion of the spirit put holiness beyond the reach of most human beings. But they are even more problematic for another reason: they indirectly foster, or at least legitimate, the "taste for blood" that the dietary laws were meant to contain. But why they do so may not be self-evident. Mr. Kass has demonstrated that those who reject the dietary laws *because they are irrational* are incorrect; the most common reasons given for such a rejection are that the laws are man-made, invented for "health reasons," and that modern science has answered our health concerns, so abiding by them is now irrational. By demonstrating that there *are* rational reasons for the dietary rules, especially reasons unrelated to health concerns, Mr. Kass has demonstrated that the rejection of those rules is not a matter of reason, but of willful rebellion against reason. Worse, it is a willful rebellion against the capacity of humans to become truly holy, that is to say, to be truly human.

Mr. Kass has opened the door to holiness for those who, having been thoroughly exposed to skepticism, no longer can, in the name of probity, say, "We hear and we will do."

MARTIN J. PLAX
Cleveland, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Leon R. Kass's article is excellent. Those interested in showing their fellow Jews how the faith of their fathers is relevant to their lives today should distribute this article to all who are open to its explanation.

RICHARD LEVY
Alexandria, Virginia

LEON R. KASS writes:

Readers of most of these letters who have not read the article which provoked them might never guess what that article was about: an attempt to understand the meaning and purpose of the dietary laws of Leviticus by means of a careful study of the biblical text that put them forward. I argued that the principles which separate the clean from the unclean animals are the same as the rational cosmological principles of the creation (Genesis 1), preeminently the principle of separation itself; that the dietary laws thereby "implicitly pay homage to the articulated order of the world and the dignity of life and living form"; that "they incorporate into the act of eating an acknowledgment of the problematic character of eating as a threat to order, life, and form"; and that "they celebrate, in gratitude and reverence, the mysterious source of the articulated world and its generous hospitality in providing food, both for life and thought." Commemorating the creation and the Creator, the dietary laws seek to sanctify eating and to move human beings toward holiness.

None of my critics directly disputes my reading. They rather fault me for the enterprise itself; on various grounds they tacitly deny that any truth or wisdom could be gained by reading and pondering this old book. But one can never learn anything from a text if one reads it only to see whether it agrees or disagrees with one's prejudices (my vegetarian readers) or, worse, if one "knows" in advance that we enlightened moderns can learn nothing from "the ancient myths of men" (John M. Black III), or that a book's seemingly reasoned discourse is in fact merely a rationalization either for existing customs and economic necessities (Brigitte M. Goldstein) or for the naked will to power of ruling elites (Jonas Dovydenas). No fair-minded thoughtful person should settle for such prejudices: he will first scrupulously read the text and think deeply about its content and meaning, he will then read commentary or interpretation and judge its merits for himself. The proof of the pudding is in the pondering.

Mr. Dovydenas crudely caricatures the dietary laws (blood sausage versus granola) and mistakenly reduces their meaning to considerations of health, not holiness. Deliberately deaf to the text, he exhorts us to look past the content of the speech to what he "knows" must be the self-interest of the speaker. Let me apply his principle to his own remarks. What should

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one conclude about someone who gratuitously identifies the EPA regulators and their dishonest researchers with those people who "believe pork is [ritually] unclean," who claims that the United States has become "an 'Old Testament' society," and who concludes that "the New Class is the oldest class of all" (he means, I take it, Jewish priests)?

He should perhaps speak with Mr. Black who "knows" that we have become a pagan society and is glad for the fact that man is (now) his own master. Repeating the usual canards against biblical religion—it is the cause of racism, sexism, and religious hatreds, often leading to war—and using the ills of the (man-ruled?) world to disprove the existence of the biblical God, he nevertheless prudently endorses the ethics of the Ten Commandments; but he is apparently ignorant of the God-centered content of the first four commandments. A friend of modern liberalism—I'm another—Mr. Black has apparently not noticed that it needs for its survival many non-liberal beliefs, practices, and institutions, and that even the five "Thou Shalt Nots" of the Second Table of the Decalogue are losing ground in contemporary American society. Morally speaking, liberalism is neck-deep in a foxhole, dug partly by such overconfident boosters of "man the master."

Brigitte M. Goldstein thinks, unaccountably, that a divine law "stamping approval on ancient, well-established customs" would make God's decrees seem "less arbitrary and whimsical" than if, as I argued, they were both a product of rational intelligence and a memorial of the intelligible order of the world. Moreover, her economic speculations, even if accurate, cannot explain why fish, some birds, and locusts are considered clean and edible: do desert-wandering shepherds normally eat fish? Mrs. Goldstein is correct in observing that God appears to prefer shepherds to city-dwellers, but we differ as to why. She thinks the clever Israelites wrote a book that would pronounce divine preference upon their already well-established (but otherwise arbitrary) ways; I think that the biblical author, leaning against the ever-present human temptation for cities and their prideful claim to self-sufficiency, presents God's opposition to cities in stories that enable

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thoughtful readers to discover for themselves the rational—and not accidental—basis for such opposition. Which view makes more sense?

I have nothing against vegetarianism; neither does the Bible. I did not say that vegetarians "violate the Jewish dietary laws"; on the contrary, I said that they neither violate nor follow them. Vegetarianism is one thing, *kashrut* another: if you don't believe me, read the text.

Susan Kalev and Richard H. Schwartz use important Judaic principles to support cogent prudential and ethical reasons for giving up meat (actually, their reasons argue rather for eating *less* meat, and only from animals not grown by cruel factory-farming methods). I share some of their concerns; for the sake of the argument, let me even grant that adoption of their ways would be healthier, more compassionate, and ecologically prudent. But the holy and sacred are not reducible to the healthy and the ethical-prudent; thus, it does not follow that the act of eating would be "more sanctified by vegetarian practice" (Susan Kalev). On the subject of holiness, who can contradict what God Himself says it requires (see Leviticus 20:24-26)?

It is true, as Roberta Kalechofsky suggests, that much of post-biblical Jewish tradition regards eating meat as a concession—but a necessary concession—to human weakness. I gave ample support for this view in my reading of the Noachic law and covenant, and I even suggested that the specifically Jewish dietary laws push back from the full permission to eat meat, granted to humankind after the Flood, in the direction of the pre-human fruit-and-nut diet of the innocent garden of Eden. But the laws of *kashrut* do not go all the way back, nor do they even suggest that it would be better to do so if we could. Why not? Does not the biblical text clearly suggest, as I argued, that observing the legal distinction between clean and unclean is somehow higher—and holier—than defending the natural difference between the living and non-living? Not regarding myself superior to the text, I tried to learn why it might hold such a view. Those interested in the full-fledged argument might wish to have a look at my book, *The Hungry Soul.*

Martin J. Plax has grasped my central intention—to disclose the inner and indeed rational meaning of *kashrut*—and has pushed my argument polemically beyond where I myself had taken it. He ingeniously sees the link between the utopian "hyper-spiritualizers" of human life (who depreciate the meaning of our embodiment) and the brutish cannibals (who, conversely, somaticize spirit and think dismembered flesh still carries the conquering powers of soul). Both sides do violence to the truth of our lively psychophysical integrity, which traditional Judaism honors and upholds in its unswerving celebration of life. Perhaps Mr. Plax should therefore say (with me) that *kashrut*, like Jewish law in general, does not "ascend beyond" physical existence so much as it elevates and sanctifies it, revealing the holy possibilities within earthly life itself.

Big Government, Round 2

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "It's Big Government, Stupid" [June], David Frum blames most, if not all, of America's economic and social problems on the welfare state. From Mr. Frum's nostalgic perspective, "the welfare state was set up in 1933," ending a glorious era of rugged individualism and personal responsibility driven by the discipline of free-market capitalism.

Mr. Frum, of course, is talking about welfare for individuals, not businesses. State welfare for business interests has been with America from the beginning. But these subsidies do not figure in Mr. Frum's analysis. It is only when subsidies are provided to the poor that Mr. Frum gets concerned about the corruption of moral conduct and personal responsibility. Thus, wholly apart from his ridiculous assertion that prior to 1933 "almost everyone" was deterred from engaging in misconduct, Mr. Frum is simply wrong about the role of public assistance in the pre-1933 period. From the moment the Declaration of Independence was signed, the American government provided military force to exterminate and expel the native population from the land and supported the extensive use of slave labor—essentially subsidizing the entire labor component of America's agricultural and textile industries. This was no small matter. Cotton at the time was fueling the industrial revolution, much as oil fuels the current industrial economy. . . .

Twentieth-century America has seen continued corporate welfare. Indeed, many of the nation's most significant industries, including aviation, electronics, computers, and metallurgy, were developed and supported by massive subsidies from the Pentagon—all at taxpayer expense. The subsidies continue even with the end of the cold war. Just recently the Pentagon announced a $1-billion subsidy program for the computer "flat-screen" industry to help make it competitive with Japan. Many other industries, such as agriculture, textiles, automobiles, shoes, real estate, and banking remain protected by direct subsidies or other public assistance.

Mr. Frum, however, does not express any concern that the enormous public subsidy to corporate America—which has gone on for over 200 years now—has caused these corporations to become dependent, morally corrupt, irresponsible, or lacking in initiative. Since these subsidies were raging during the pre-1933 period that Mr. Frum recalls so fondly, his central thesis falls apart upon its own logic—unless one thinks that only individuals, not businesses, should be subjected to the harsh discipline of the market.

Perhaps most startling, given Mr. Frum's thesis, is the company he offers as the model for the right way to do things—Toyota. Toyota's approach, he tells us, results in nonslovenly workers, efficient production lines, and "getting it right the first time." Toyota, however, is a highly-subsidized company, the beneficiary of massive public assistance, highly subsidized R&D, protective tariffs, and other favorable government regulations. Even more significant, like virtually all of Japan's employees, Toyota's are provided extremely generous benefit packages and are essentially guaranteed lifetime employment. Although Mr. Frum cruelly tells us that everyone needs "the constant risk of losing his job" to have discipline and self-control, his own example undermines his central premise.

Moreover, Mr. Frum does not even bother to provide any evidence to support his view that public assistance is the root cause of today's social problems. We are instead asked to accept this as a

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matter of ideological faith. Once again, Japan provides a compelling refutation of Mr. Frum's central thesis. Japan is a classic example of the welfare state that Mr. Frum finds so counterproductive. Yet most serious analysts recognize that Japan has become an economic dynamo precisely because of its massive state intervention in the marketplace. . . .

In the end, Mr. Frum is an advocate for the rich and the privileged and he is insensitive, indeed hostile, to the needs and circumstances of the poor. . . .

Given the positions he advocates—with his great concern about corrupting the morals of the average American through public assistance and lack of any parallel concern for corrupting the rich through such assistance—Mr. Frum should not be surprised that, as he acknowledges, "the people are not really with [him]."

JEFFREY B. VALLE
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Frum's article betrays a narrow-mindedness, if not willful ignorance, more appropriate to the major business weeklies or the *Wall Street Journal*. Rather than examining "the culture" in a manner which might demonstrate a familiarity with American history, Mr. Frum serves up a critique no more insightful than that delivered by your average CEO.

Mr. Frum properly excoriates the moral lassitude which appears to be the consequence of the welfare state. But his focus is curiously narrow, limited to those actually on welfare or collecting Social Security. Anyone with the least familiarity with business—especially as it lobbies both in Washington and the state and municipal centers of our country—recognizes the subsidies which are given to so-called "private enterprise." . . .

One only has to reflect upon our "command economy"—the military-industrial complex—to appreciate the range and depth of the lassitude. Far more than any other factor—even the social-reform impulses strictly attributable to the New Deal—America's wars have created big government. . . .

More troubling than Mr. Frum's selective criticism of the welfare state is his complete failure to examine the corrosive impact which our "radical individualism in economics" (as Daniel Bell puts it in

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The Arab Boycott of Israel

Does it give any clues to Arab intentions?

In the current peace negotiations between the Arab states and Israel there is much pressure on Israel to make "accommodations for peace." No such gestures are ever being requested from the Arabs. One very important matter, the Arab boycott of Israel, is never even being discussed.

What are the facts?

The Background of the Boycott. The Arab states try to make the world believe that their hostility toward Israel is based on Israel's "occupation" of "Arab lands", which came under Israeli administration as a result of the 1967 Six-Day War. But the Arab boycott of Israel goes back even further—to 1946, two years before the state of Israel even existed.

How the Boycott works. The boycott works on several levels. The *primary boycott* prohibits Arab people and Arab states to do any business—with and in Israel. The *secondary boycott* attempts to prevent businesses anywhere in the world from any economic activity with Israel and threatening them with economic retaliation if they do not conform. It is a very potent weapon, since most countries and most businesses are well aware that the large Arab market and its enormous oil wealth make it most unattractive to get into the bad graces of the Arabs. Little consideration is given to the fact that the boycott is a gross violation of international law. The U.S. is the one shining exception to the almost universal acceptance of this economic blackmail. There is also the *tertiary boycott* that punishes firms that deal with blacklisted businesses. And perhaps the most damaging aspect is the so-called "*voluntary boycott*", by which companies, and in some cases entire countries, refrain pre-emptively from doing business with Israel in order to avoid retaliation by the Arabs.

The boycott also applies to international shipping, aviation and tourism: Most ships and airplanes calling on Israel are barred from Arab ports; airplanes enroute to and from Israel cannot overfly Arab countries. Israelis or any travelers with Israeli visas in their passports may not enter most Arab countries.

The Arab Boycott Office maintains a blacklist, which at last count included over 6,300 entries in 96 countries. In the United States alone, over 12,000 firms each year receive requests from Arab firms for boycott compliance. In Europe and Asia, where, in contrast to the United States, boycott compliance is usually legal, the numbers are probably much higher.

> "The Arab boycott is undisguised economic warfare against the state of Israel. It is totally unrelated to any territorial dispute the Arabs may have with Israel."

The Cost of the Boycott to Israel. The primary damage of the boycott to the Israeli economy is that it prevents or considerably hampers investments in the country. That loss is estimated to be on the order of $500 to $600 million per year. The loss of potential trade with the Arab countries alone is on the order of over $500 million per year. Because of the boycott, Israel's commercial exports are at least 10% less than they would otherwise be—a loss of about $1.2 billion per year!

The Arab boycott is undisguised economic warfare against Israel. The boycott is totally unrelated to any territorial dispute the Arabs may have with Israel, since the boycott started over twenty years before any such territories came under Israeli administration. Its purpose is the strangulation of Israel—to achieve by economic means what the Arabs, despite many tries, have been unable to achieve by military means. But the greatest losers of the boycott may well be the Arabs themselves. Blinded by their hatred of Israel they have prevented the Middle East from becoming an area of growth and prosperity exceeding even the Asian Pacific Rim countries. Rescinding the almost 50-year old boycott would be an encouraging signal to the world and to the Israeli public. Their not bringing even such a gesture does give a clue that the intentions of the Arabs are not peaceful and that Israel is justified in proceeding with greatest caution in any peace negotiations.

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The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism) has had upon the culture. A brief historical overview of the workings of this radical economic individualism might be instructive here.

Gordon S. Wood has demonstrated (in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*) that the aristocratic vision of individuals such as Thomas Jefferson (a vision which informed the debate underlying our Constitution) was soon supplanted by one offered by "artisans, laborers, and proto-businessmen of all sorts." Notwithstanding Jefferson's belief that a "natural aristocracy," possessing talent and virtue, would capture the votes of the electorate, these businessmen urged the people to do their "utmost at election to prevent all men of talents, laywers, rich men from being elected." Given the leveling and expansion of the franchise which resulted from the War of Independence, the aristocrats who articulated the rationale for that very war were tossed into the dustbin of history.

Thus, as Lewis H. Lapham has recently written,

> By 1812, the United States had traded the revolutionary generation's dream of a classical republic governed . . . by "notable geniuses and great-souled men" for a democracy owned and operated by common people with a common interest in making money and getting ahead. The terms of the deal—vulgarity, rootlessness, and anti-intellectualism as the price for economic and political freedom.

Informing our culture, then, was an emergent business ethic which was excoriated by Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1841. Speaking to the Mechanics' Apprentices Library Association in Boston, Emerson asserted that

> the general system of our trade . . . is a system of selfishness; is not dictated by the high sentiments of human nature; is not measured by the exact law of reciprocity; much less by the sentiments of love and heroism, but is a system of distrust, of concealment, of superior keenness, not of giving but of taking advantage. . . .

The incorporation of America during the last three decades of the 19th century only exacerbated these tendencies. . . .

Perhaps a highly homogeneous and more mature culture, such as is found in Japan, can withstand the predatory economic individualism of the bourgeoisie. America's diverse and relatively immature culture, however, has been shattered . . . by it.

America's conservatives, especially our conservative business elite and their apologists, bear much of the responsibility for our problem with "the culture." Even during our major wars, we have been less able than other nations to act as if we were all in this together, due to our radical economic individualism. Given voices such as Mr. Frum's, I despair for our country now that the cold war has ended.

WALTER C. UHLER
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Kudos to David Frum for exposing conservatives' cowardice about government spending. They flee into gimmicks: a line-item veto, war on waste, Gramm-Rudman, a balanced-budget amendment, inadequate Kasich cuts, spending freezes. . . .

While Mr. Frum is right about the welfare state's malign feedback effects, he ultimately misses the mark. He errs in seeing government as the determinant of character and conduct. In actuality, beliefs determine character, which governs conduct. . . . Big Government's perverse incentives are disastrous, but people would not respond to them if their beliefs did not predispose them to do so.

The "most important force driving the social trends that offend conservatives" is not Big Government but secularization and the corollary shift in beliefs, which underlies Leviathan and makes the problem intractable. A secularized population, laying up treasure on earth, becomes deeply frightened of life and its perils, and demands government-provided security from the risk which Mr. Frum rightly sees pervading a capitalist economy. Because our population's standard of living is its true (if unconfessed) god, it clings to the "entitlements" dominating spending. Thus cutting, let alone abolishing, entitlements is dangerous—and thus "conservatives" flinch from it. . . .

Mr. Frum is magnificently right to admonish conservatives to witness for bleak truths. But indicating the toxic effects of social programs will not suffice. Conservatives must challenge the beliefs informing both Leviathan *and* the culture.

JOHN ATTARIAN
Ann Arbor, Michigan

DAVID FRUM writes:

What on earth gave Jeffrey B. Valle the idea that I support corporate welfare? And if he dislikes subsidies to industry as much as he says he does, I trust he will be casting a vote against the Clinton administration come November '96, in protest against the administration's decision to give federal aid to the auto industry to build an electric car, its heavily subsidized defense-conversion program, its targeted-trade sanctions against Japan, and so on.

I am less impressed than Walter C. Uhler with the alleged cultural contradictions of capitalism. It is societies that have practiced the most radical individualism in economics—the Calvinist Netherlands, Victorian England, pre-New Deal America—that have also demanded the strictest standards of morality from their people. The more collectivist America and Europe have become, the more dissolute.

I thank John Attarian for his letter. I do not know that we can ever solve the question of which came first, Big Government or moral decay. The issue is, is there any hope for improvement? Arresting moral decay is not something that political authorities in a democratic society can do, not directly. But if Big Government and moral erosion are linked, as Mr. Attarian and I agree, let us pull the lever that is pullable, in the hope that progress in one area will somehow feed back into progress in the other.

Maximilian Kolbe

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

George E. Ehrlich [Letters from Readers, July] is quite correct to point out that the man for whom Maximilian Kolbe sacrificed his life was a father who survived Auschwitz to raise his family, but was not a Jew. His statement that Kolbe was "a rabid anti-Semite," however, appears to me to overstate the evidence.

Studies of Kolbe's works done at the time of his beatification, for example by the Holocaust Studies Center in Saint Louis, have shown that the half-dozen or so negative

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references to Jews in Kolbe's voluminous writings consist of glancing statements about what was considered a Masonic-Jewish opposition to Catholicism. And it was shown that one of Kolbe's magazines, apparently while he was away in the missions, did indeed publish blatantly anti-Semitic literature.

Kolbe's own, consistent approach, however, was that Jews should be loved and prayed for, in the hope that they would be attracted to Christianity. On several occasions, writing in this vein, Kolbe actively opposed suppressive measures or violence against Jews.

Similarly, it was reported that the Holy See's investigation confirmed not only Kolbe's staunch public opposition to Nazism (the reason he was sent to Auschwitz), but also the fact that he was instrumental in opening the doors of the monasteries of his order to Jews attempting to escape persecution. These are hardly the attitudes or actions of a "rabid anti-Semite," although Kolbe's theological attitude was understandably pre-Vatican II.

On this as on other matters of historical memory, I can only repeat a plea that I made some years ago. Before we reach judgments about each other, especially with reference to the events of the Holocaust, the Jewish and Catholic communities need to sit down together and develop what I called a "dialogical methodology" for sifting through *all* the available evidence. We are at present at great risk of creating two separate and conflicting sets of memories etched in stark tones of black and white; actual history, however, most often takes place in shades of gray.

If one follows the criteria outlined by Yad Vashem, as I presume George Ehrlich does, it is quite reasonable to withhold the title "righteous Gentile" from Kolbe. But it may also be reasonable, from a different perspective on the same historical events, for Catholics to venerate him as a "Saint," a title which has its own criteria. Conversely, one could make a case that Oskar Schindler is rightly remembered as a "righteous Gentile" by Jews, but might not qualify to be named a Saint by his own Church.

EUGENE J. FISHER
National Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, D.C.

White Males & the "Times"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The editorial writers of the *New York Times* and Midge Decter ["No White Males Need Apply," June] may have their differences, but the owners of the newspaper evidently agree with her.

Commenting on the same *Times* editorial cited by Miss Decter, the April 15 issue of the *Forward* noted that the *Times*'s

> proprietors rejected their editorial's reasoning and announced that they were plucking from the *Times*'s own herd of white-male editors the ever-able Joseph Lelyveld and boosting him to the position of executive editor, which is the top position at the *Times*. They also announced that they were spurning a raft of able newspapermen and women of various hues and genders from within the *Times*'s own ranks and bringing in for the No. 2 job of managing editor the legendary Eugene Roberts, another white male.

The *Forward* went on to ask why the rest of the country should not be permitted the same leeway in hiring practices for top jobs—i.e., to make a choice based on merit.

Years ago, our children wondered why we read the *New York Times*, a paper with no "funnies." Now I have an answer for them: with its editorial page, it doesn't need them.

ROBERT A. RIESMAN
Providence, Rhode Island

Science & Gender

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of *The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science* by Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt [June], Jeffrey Salmon mentions Sandra Harding. I am reminded of a verse I wrote some years ago:

VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY HARDING
(as Professor Sandra Harding might have put in her book, *The Science Question in Feminism*)

The author of those well-known laws,
I. Newton, was a male;
It follows, then, they were the cause
of Woman's sorry tale.
And then, to make oppression sure,
And bolstering their plan,
They chose (*res ipsa loquitur!*)
A. Einstein! See? A man!

EDWARD H. GREEN
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Correction

In the September Letters section, an error occurred in the exchange on Peter L. Berger's article, "Furtive Smokers—and What They Tell Us About America." The last paragraph in John H. Kilwein's letter (page 10, column 1) should begin: "As a life-long nonsmoker."—ED.

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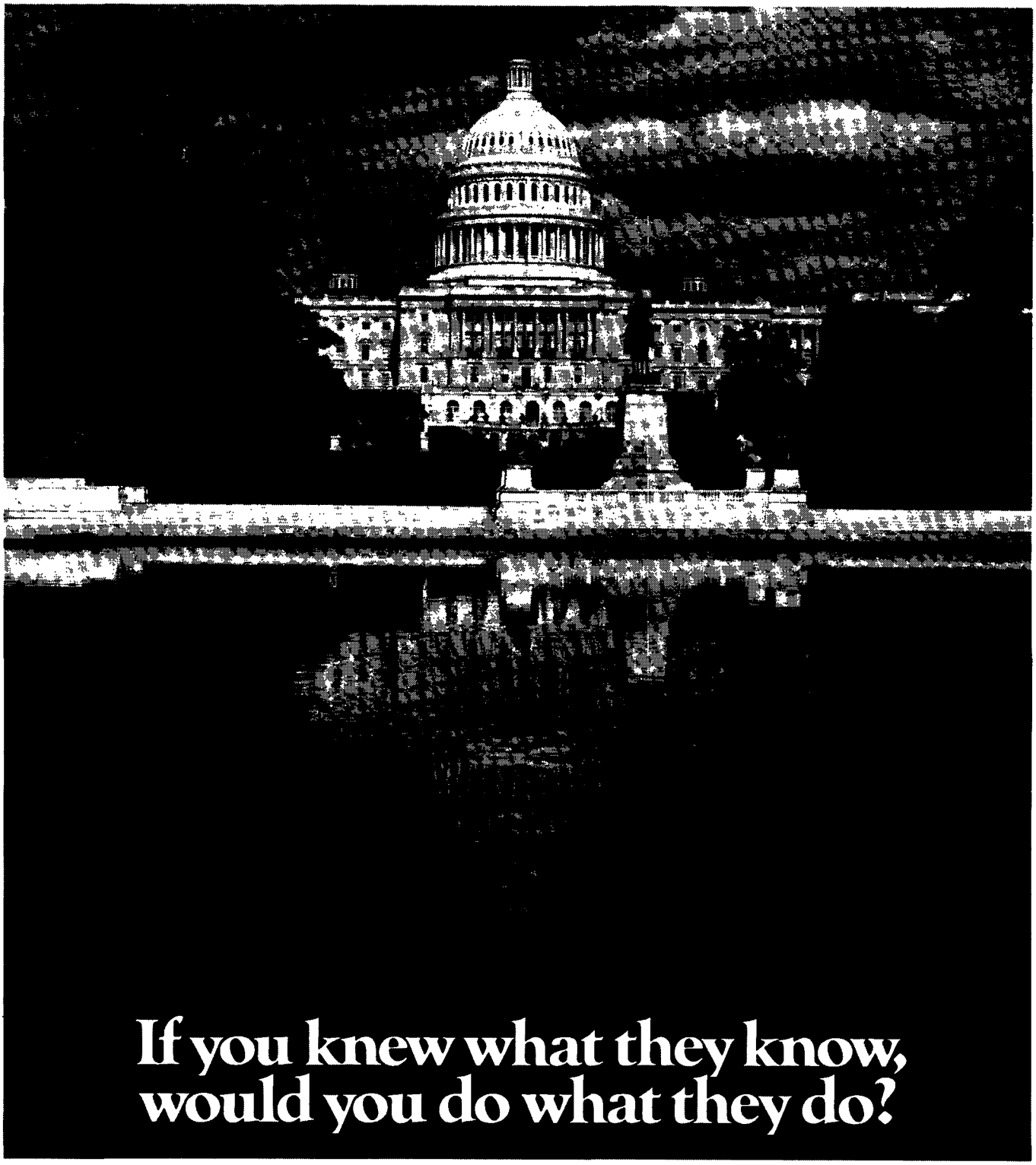

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Continuing the series we inaugurated last month with James Q. Wilson's article on crime, we here move on to the issue of education.

It is now widely recognized that this country is failing at every level to educate its young people properly. But there is less agreement on what accounts for this dismal situation, and on how it might be changed. In addressing those questions, both Gertrude Himmelfarb, writing on the universities, and Chester E. Finn, Jr., dealing with the schools, draw on many years of experience and reflection.

What To Do About Education

1: The Universities

Gertrude Himmelfarb

"THERE is a great deal of ruin in a nation," Adam Smith informed his readers. And so there is in a university. It is a comforting thought that we might keep in mind as we contemplate the transformation of higher education in recent years and consider what should be done, or undone, about it.*

A quarter of a century ago, Robert Nisbet wrote a book that is still the seminal work on the subject, *The Degradation of the Academic Dogma.* To readers fresh from the dramatic events of the 60's—the student "rebellion" at Berkeley in 1964 and the later uprisings in one university after another—Nisbet provided a larger perspective, locating the beginning of the revolution well before that memorable decade and making professors, administrators, and the government complicitous in that revolution.

Until World War II, Nisbet maintained, the university had been sustained by nothing less than a "dogma"—a faith in reason and knowledge, in the rational, dispassionate search for truth, and in the dissemination of knowledge for the sake of knowledge. The objects of knowledge changed in the course of time: the classical curriculum gave way to the modern one, by the addition first of modern history, literature, and languages, then of the sciences and social sciences. But throughout the centuries, the essential dogma, the commitment to reason and knowledge, remained intact.

A corollary of that dogma also remained intact: the hierarchy of knowledge and of the bearers of knowledge. Even in this most democratic of nations, Nisbet found, the university was not a democratic institution. Not all subjects were equal *sub specie universitatis*; not all were worthy of study. Students were not the equals of their instructors, nor administrators of professors, nor junior professors of their seniors.

Nor did the university give equal status, or equal time, to non-Western civilizations. There were courses, to be sure, on Asia, Africa, and India. But they were peripheral to the curriculum and were studied in the spirit and methods of Western scholarship. The university was frankly "ethnocentric" (it is curious to find Nisbet using this word that far back), committed to a "faith in the Western tradition: in the ideas, values, systems, and languages that belong to the tiny part of the world that is the promontory of the Eurasian continent known as Western Europe."

The academic dogma, as Nisbet saw it, was quite different from the democratic dogma. The academy was a community in itself, distinct in its mission, its values, and its structure from the larger society. This was not to say that it was of no social utility. Throughout the centuries it fed into

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB is professor emeritus of history at the City University of New York. She is also the author of numerous works of historical scholarship, including *The Idea of Poverty, The New History and the Old, Poverty and Compassion,* and *On Looking Into the Abyss.* Her forthcoming book, *The De-Moralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values,* will be published by Knopf this winter.

* I am using the term "university" generically to include colleges as well, so many of which have been renamed universities as to make obscure the old distinction between a purely undergraduate institution and one that offers graduate and professional degrees.

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the mainstream of society—into the law, diplomacy, clerisy, polity, civil bureaucracy. It also served as a socializing, civilizing, and even moralizing agent for the students who passed through it (and perhaps as well for the professors ensconced in it). But it did all this indirectly, as a fortunate byproduct of its essential functions, which were the creation, preservation, and transmission of knowledge and culture.

SO, AT LEAST, it was until after World War II, when the expansion of the university, partly as a result of the GI Bill, brought about a "Reformation" of the university, comparable, in Nisbet's view, to the great religious Reformation of the 16th century.* The new reformation was precipitated by money—the influx of funds, first from the government and then from private sources, which generated projects, programs, institutes, and centers that were unrelated either to the teaching function of the university or to the kind of research that had an intimate connection with teaching. The university, already burdened with business and professional schools, was thus transformed into a "multiversity."

The sciences were most obviously affected by these new sources of money, but so were the social sciences, which discovered a new rationale for grant-getting and a new mission for the university: the solving of social problems—poverty, the environment, urban unrest, juvenile delinquency, and whatever other subject might occur to a resourceful professor. If disinterested knowledge was the dogma of the pre-reformation university, "relevance" was the dogma of the post-reformation university.

Having committed itself to solving society's problems, Nisbet observed, the university could hardly ignore the problems of its own students, their emotional needs, egos, sensitivities, and identity crises. The university then assumed the character of a therapeutic institution as well. Since part of the therapy (especially after the uprisings of the 60's) involved the "empowerment" of the students—their admission to curriculum, governance, even appointment and tenure committees—the result was the conversion of the university, now a multiversity, into something that resembled a "participatory democracy."

From all this, it was only one short step to the politicization of the university. The socially-conscious university was, inevitably, a politically-conscious one. Professors and students had always had political views and commitments, but they had expressed and exercised them in their extra-curricular capacity, as it were—as individuals rather than as professors and students. The 60's changed that, bringing those views and commitments into the university itself, into classrooms, the curriculum, faculty appointments, and official pronouncements on political affairs.

Nisbet did not suggest that all universities succumbed to these tendencies to the same degree. Some were quite immune to them, remaining liberal-arts colleges rather than multiversities, emphasizing teaching, writing, and research of the old variety, preserving a "core curriculum" that was more than a token "distribution requirement," functioning as genuine educational communities, and resisting the call to social and political "activism."

Nor were all disciplines, even in the large universities, affected in the same way. For history and literature, the 1950's were a period of great fertility and creativity. The sciences flourished in those institutions that managed to resist the distortions produced by government and corporate contracts. And Nisbet's own discipline, sociology, was greatly enhanced by the new kinds of student attracted to that relatively new subject. The postwar students, more mature and diverse than the old, had a profound effect on the university, bringing to it an atmosphere of professionalism and entrepreneurship, and at the same time a more vigorous and fertile intellectual spirit.

A QUARTER of a century after the publication of Nisbet's book, we may be tempted to speak of a "Second Reformation," much of it prefigured by the first but carried to extremes that even Nisbet could not have anticipated. If the First Reformation enlarged the university by making it accessible, as a result of the GI Bill and a booming economy, to students who could not otherwise have afforded to go to a university or who would not have thought to do so, the Second Reformation has enlarged it in quite another way, by making it accessible, under "open-admissions" and "affirmative-action" programs, to students who do not meet the regular requirements.

The original, and entirely laudable, purpose of affirmative action was seeking out such students (especially blacks and other minorities), encouraging them to apply, and giving them remedial courses that would enable them to fulfill the requirements and meet the regular standards. In the course of time, however, affirmative action came to mean the admission of students under a different set of standards, with little or no obligation to meet the regular requirements.

Initially confined to students, affirmative action was soon applied to the faculty, so that all universities now find themselves under great pressure to appoint women, blacks, Hispanics, and other "unprivileged" groups. One university

* Jacques Barzun does not use quite such apocalyptic language, but he, too, dates the transformation of the university from 1945. From his *Teacher in America* (1945), to *The American University* (1968), to a multitude of other books on the subject (most recently *Begin Here*, 1991), Barzun has been one of the most imaginative and incisive commentators on the university.

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recently extended the affirmative-action category to homosexuals, announcing that it would make special efforts to recruit them and promising to give them preferential treatment in appointments; it is to be expected that other universities will follow suit.

A more momentous effect of affirmative action has been on the curriculum itself, especially in the humanities and social sciences. One might say that affirmative action has replaced relevance as the reigning dogma in the university. Women's studies, black studies, and ethnic studies (although not gay studies—this was a later development) were the product of the First Reformation, initially as individual courses, then as full-fledged departments. It took the Second Reformation to "mainstream" these subjects into the curriculum, converting some of them from electives into required courses. While most universities have abandoned the Western-civilization requirement (the very idea of Western civilization is anathema in politically-correct circles), many have imposed a new requirement, often the only one in the curriculum, of a specified number of courses in African-American, ethnic, or women's studies.

The basic categories of affirmative action—race, ethnicity, and gender (displacing, to the chagrin of Marxists, the older trinity of race, class, and gender)—are being imposed not only on the curriculum in general but on individual disciplines and courses. The goal now is to mainstream these categories into every subject, so that a course on the Renaissance may be obliged to give due place (and perhaps more than due place) to the role and status of women, or a course on the novel to include a proper representation (or overrepresentation) of works by women, African-American, and third-world authors.

So far, this goal of mainstreaming has been only sporadically achieved. In some institutions it has been officially prescribed; in others it has been encouraged but not made obligatory. But everywhere there is a considerable amount of social pressure to adhere to it.

It is interesting that gender should have emerged as a far more potent force than race or ethnicity, penetrating into the heart of the disciplines—"transforming" them, as the feminists boast—as the others have not done. Perhaps this is because there are more women students and professors than black or ethnic students and professors, or because the feminists are more ideologically aggressive. Or perhaps the concept of "engenderment" lends itself to bolder, more imaginative uses. The original concept of women's studies—the study of women in particular periods or places—has been transformed into feminist studies—the study of periods and places from the "viewpoint," as is candidly said, of women. To "engender" the French Revolution, for example, is not only to deal with the role and status of women in the Revolution, but to "feminize" the Revolution itself: to interpret it as the struggle of liberty, personified by a female figure, against the patriarchal monarchy (or, as another theory has it, as the struggle of patriarchal republicans against an effeminate monarchy).

The sciences have been more impervious than most disciplines to political pressures and intellectual fashions, but even they are not entirely immune.* They are, indeed, the latest converts to engenderment—not in the sense of encouraging more women to become scientists, but in altering the conception of science itself. Some feminists object to the rational, logical, objective structure of science (to say nothing of the language of science—"power," "force," the "big-bang" theory) as inherently "masculinist" and patriarchal, and demand that science be made more compatible with a "feminist perspective" and "female subjectivity." An article, "Toward a Feminist Algebra," complains that conventional mathematics suggests "a woman whose nature desires to be the conquered Other"; and a book, *The Science Question in Feminism*, declares Newton's *Principia* so suffused with "gender symbolism, gender structure, and gender identity" as to be nothing less than a "rape manual."

THE effect of this multipronged assault of affirmative action—in student admissions and faculty appointments, in the curriculum and disciplines—has been the Balkanization of the university. The traditional ideal of the university, as a community where professors and students are united in a common enterprise for a common purpose, has been replaced by the idea of a loose, almost amorphous, federation made up of distinct groups pursuing their special interests and agendas (and, often, voluntarily segregating themselves in dorms, dining rooms, and lecture halls).

By the same token, the disciplines have been fragmented, so that they no longer have a common focus and a common body of knowledge. This is the effect of "multiculturalism" as it is now conceived and practiced. Instead of viewing race, class, ethnicity, and gender as parts of a whole, introduced into the narrative of American history, for example, at those points where they are particularly relevant, they are now seen as competing wholes—not as parts of a single story but as quite separate and distinct stories. *E pluribus unum* has been converted into *Ex uno plura*—"from the one many," as the famous gaffe by Vice President Gore has it.

* The influence on academic science of postmodernism, environmentalism, multiculturalism, feminism, and other ideologies is documented in the recent book, *Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science*, by Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt. [See the review by Jeffrey Salmon in the June COMMENTARY.—ED.]

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A byproduct of Balkanization is the further politicization of the university. The rival groups, recognizing no common mission, are engaged in a continual power struggle, not only about such matters as appointments, tenure, and the like, but about the very substance of education—what should be taught and how it should be taught.

Indeed, knowledge itself, according to a fashionable theory, is nothing but a reflection of the dominant power structure. The older idea of knowledge, implying that there is a truth to be known, is deemed authoritarian and oppressive. Since there is no truth, no objective knowledge, there is only power. "Everything is political," a popular slogan has it. Hence the professor is necessarily an advocate and the classroom a political arena; the only stipulation is that the professor's advocacy be open and clear.

Compared with this ultimate act of politicization—the politicizing of knowledge itself—"political correctness" (PC) may appear to be a lesser evil. Yet PC goes beyond the much-publicized rules governing behavior and speech, beyond even the attempt to govern thought by means of "sensitivity" and "consciousness-raising" sessions. It goes to the heart of the academic enterprise. It may seem benign to neuterize language, disallowing "he" in a generic sense (although even that can wreak havoc with the study of Shakespeare or of historical documents). But to be made sensitive to the sexual connotations of such words as "force" or "penetrating" (as in a preceding paragraph of this essay), or to the racial implication of a phrase like "black thoughts," is distracting and inhibiting. Far more serious, of course, is the suppression of research on intelligence, for example, on the ground that the subject itself is suspect and that the conclusions might be politically incorrect.

IN THE light of all these problems, it may seem carping to complain of the trivialization of study and research—courses on comic books and popular films, dissertations on deservedly obscure writers merely because they are "unprivileged," distribution requirements fulfilled by ludicrously inappropriate and undemanding courses (a course in interior design to satisfy the humanities requirement, or on "Lifetime Fitness" for the social-science requirement). Combined with the absence of any structured program of study, such trivia contribute to a further fragmentation of the university and the dissipation of any sense of educational coherence.

What makes it worse is that these are not "gut" courses devised by pandering instructors and sanctioned by a lax administration. Some are seriously intended and defended by professors flaunting their defiance of traditional standards—or, indeed, of any standards. The well-known professor of literature Houston Baker says that choosing between Pearl Buck and Virginia Woolf is "no different from choosing between a hoagy and a pizza," and proudly declares that he himself is "dedicated to the day when we have a disappearance of those standards."

That these are not isolated cases is demonstrated by a survey conducted by the National Endowment for the Humanities a few years ago, which found that students could graduate from:

- 78 percent of the nation's colleges and universities without ever taking a course in the history of Western civilization;
- 38 percent without any history at all;
- 45 percent without a course in American or English literature;
- 77 percent without a course in a foreign language;
- 41 percent without a course in mathematics;
- 33 percent without a course in the sciences.

Another survey conducted by the Gallup Organization showed that:

- 25 percent of college seniors could not locate Columbus's voyage within the correct half-century;
- 25 percent could not distinguish Churchill's words from Stalin's, or Karl Marx's ideas from the U.S. Constitution;
- 40 percent did not know when the Civil War occurred;
- most could not identify the authors of works by Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton.

SO MUCH for the bad news. The good news is that it is not all bad. What I have been describing is real enough and prevalent enough, but it is not the only reality and it is not universal. It is a tribute to human nature that some students succeed in acquiring a decent education, and some professors manage to think and teach and write as if there is such a thing as knowledge and as if truth can still be aspired to, however difficult it is to achieve.

These students and professors are not innocents. They know the pressures they have to resist and the price they have to pay. The author of a dissertation on the political philosophy of John Adams does not expect to receive the kinds of job offers (especially if he is a white male) as the author of a dissertation on the sexual politics of Alice Walker (especially if she is a black female).

There is, then, a saving remnant in the university—and perhaps more than a remnant, perhaps even a large, if silent, minority of professors and students who would prefer a more traditional mode of teaching and scholarship but who do not have the intellectual resources or, in some cases, the moral courage to speak out openly. (Tenure, we have discovered, is a security against unemployment, not against timidity.)

Some professors try to avoid confrontations

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with their students and colleagues by making minimal concessions to the prevailing fashions in the classroom (putting the obligatory number of books by women and blacks on the reading list), while continuing, in their own research and writing, to "do their thing." One can sympathize with them. They disapprove of the politicization of the university and do not want to spend their own time and energy in political disputation. They want only to teach and work. But inevitably the pressure to conform intensifies and finally becomes intolerable.

It is these professors and students, openly or covertly disaffected, who give us cause for hope. And it is upon them that we may usefully direct our attention.

I AM PAINFULLY aware of the anticlimactic nature of this approach. It would be gratifying to launch a counter-reformation to undo the damage done by the two massive reformations that the university has experienced in the past half century. And it is not difficult to think of ways of bringing about such a counter-reformation:

- Restore a core curriculum, a structured course of studies such as was common only a few decades ago, not only at Harvard, Columbia, and Chicago but at most colleges and universities throughout the country.
- Spin off the institutes, centers, and special projects that clutter up the university and distract it from its main purposes. And while we are about it, spin off, too, the professional schools: business, medicine, law, social work, the performing arts, even the advanced scientific research that might better be conducted in specialized institutions.
- Reduce the number of departments, courses, programs, administrators. A massive retrenchment policy would concentrate the mind admirably upon what is important and what is not (as well as having the incidentally salutary effect of making the university more solvent and less dependent on government subsidies).
- Reverse the process by which liberal-arts colleges are transformed into universities. There are still a number of colleges that have resisted the lure of graduate programs, but far too many that have not. (Recently all the state colleges in Pennsylvania declared themselves universities. Hence we now have Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania—not, as one might think, a branch of the University of Pennsylvania, but a separate, state-supported institution.)
- Eliminate the category of Teaching Assistants (TA's), the graduate students who currently bear much of the burden of undergraduate teaching in many eminent universities, and who are themselves only barely more knowledgeable than the students they presume to teach.
- Reinstitute the old prohibitions against indoctrination in the classroom.
- Restore the original meaning of affirmative action.

One can think of other reasonable measures of reform. But all of this, in my opinion, is an exercise in futility. The reformations have gone too far to be undone. There are too many vested interests in and outside the university, too many professors committed, intellectually as well as politically, to the new programs and policies, too many recent graduates (and future professors) who know no other mode of scholarship and teaching, too many timid spirits who cannot envision any radical departure from the present conception of the university, and too many cynical ones who want only to enjoy their comfortable sinecures. There have been very few successful counter-reformations in history, and this, I am afraid, would not be one of them.

I return, then, to the idea of a saving remnant, those dissidents, open and covert, who currently keep the spirit of education alive. I can only offer some modest proposals designed to support and embolden them.

THE first proposal, befitting an educational institution, is to engage in an educational campaign, reminding people, in and outside the university, of the proper mission of the university and showing how far the university has departed from it.

That mission should be defined broadly. Even in the pre-reformation days, there was no single model of a university, no standard curriculum that would fit all sizes and shapes of institutions and students. There was, in fact, a good deal of diversity—perhaps more than we have today when that word has become the code name for a new kind of uniformity.

What we then had, in addition to a wide range of programs of study, was a common denominator of subjects deemed to be the minimal requirements of a liberal education, a common assumption about reason and objectivity governing both the classroom and research (not always attained but always aspired to), a common view of a scholarly community that brought together professors and students, however different in all other respects, in a common enterprise for a common purpose.

The first task of the educational reformer, then, is education itself—education about what a university was, what it has become, and what it might be. Even for those who have lived through the reformations of our time, it is all too easy to be seduced by present preoccupations and passions—to forget the difference, for example, between the original meaning of affirmative action and the current one, or between women's studies and feminist studies, or between black studies and Afrocentric studies, or between pluralism (in the sense of "from the many one") and

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multiculturalism (in the sense of "from the one many").

The blurring of these differences has been facilitated by the kind of obfuscation that only academics are capable of, and that the present generation of academics, trained in the arcane language of postmodernism, is more adept at than most. Only by recalling ourselves to first principles and comparing them with present practices can we appreciate the gravity of the situation and the need for reform.

The most heartening experience of recent years is the public exposure of PC and the resulting widespread revulsion against it. The first reaction on the part of the guardians of PC was to belittle the evidence as "anecdotal" and "impressionistic": the cases cited, it was said, were probably not true, and if true, they were isolated incidents of no significance. That argument is now rarely heard, as the evidence has mounted and as the supporters of PC have been forced into the open to defend what most people sensibly regard as indefensible.

If the public were similarly alerted to other practices—the "advocacy teaching," for example, that transforms the classroom into a propaganda and proselytizing forum—and if it heard professors blatantly supporting that practice, it would be similarly dismayed, not only at the particular views (political, sexual, moral) that are being conveyed, but at the idea that teachers (and, even more presumptuously, TA's) should feel free to impose those views upon their students.

THE second proposal is a corollary of the first. Even a saving remnant needs saving. The most strong-minded dissidents need to know that they are not entirely isolated, that others share their principles and, at the very least, are aware of their existence.

Here we may be encouraged by the example of the National Association of Scholars (NAS), an organization of professors dedicated to a more traditional view of the university and expressing that view through conferences, publications, and other activities. Professors who formerly felt too beleaguered to make public their disaffection now feel freer to do so, secure in the knowledge that they are not alone, not hopeless eccentrics or mavericks. (It is also helpful to know that if their institutions try to penalize them, others will come to their support.)

The existence of such an organization has the additional virtue of making it impossible for the dominant forces in the academy to pretend that there is no opposition to their policies, that everyone agrees with them. For many this is not a pretense. Like the film critic who said that she could not understand how Richard Nixon got elected because she knew no one who had voted for him, so those who are caught up in the prevailing fashions are often genuinely unaware that any enlightened person can differ with them. My own measure of the success of the NAS is the remark I sometimes hear, by those hostile to the organization, that they are astonished to find so many reputable scholars associated with it. A more objective measure of its success is the formation of not one but two rival organizations to counteract it.

If some professors have been moved to protest against the current tendencies in their universities, alumni and trustees may be encouraged to do so as well. A national association of alumni and trustees would keep its members informed of problems that are not regularly reported in the press (the accreditation, for example, of universities based upon affirmative-action criteria), and of measures that might be taken to forestall or combat undesirable policies. It would thus serve as a clearinghouse for alumni and trustees who are often ignorant of what is happening even in their own institutions, let alone in the academy at large.* More important, such an organization would suggest to alumni and trustees that they have not only the power but the duty to take a more active part in the institutions with which they are identified, to which they are contributing in time and money, and for which they are assuming moral and, in the case of trustees, legal responsibility.

Finally, there are the students. During the turbulent 60's, when the students were putting forward their claim to "empowerment," the professors put forward a counter-claim. "We are the university," they announced. (Some of us, reminded of Pogo's famous remark, "The enemy is us," irreverently translated the faculty's slogan as "The university is us.") The present generation of professors—made up of the students of the 60's, now released from all the institutional and moral inhibitions that once restrained the professoriate—are more than ever acting on that dictum. In reaction, some dissident students—dissidents from the Right rather than the Left—are expressing their dissatisfaction, not by demanding (as their predecessors did) a larger role in the governance of the university, but by publicizing their grievances in the "alternative" student newspapers that have been cropping up in one university after another.

It is surprising that there has been no serious

* A recent case that merits more attention than it has received is the experience of Georgia Institute of Technology. Five years ago, it scrapped its ineffectual remedial program and started a much more rigorous five-week summer course for minority students. Required to achieve a higher standard, the students did just that, so that they are now outperforming white students at that college and producing a significant number of qualified engineers. If alumni and trustees in other institutions knew of this program, they would be in a better position to urge their own colleges to pursue a similar policy—affirmative action in its best sense.

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effort to create an "alternative" national-student organization, in the manner of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the 60's, or the American Students Union (ASU) in the 30's. I am loath even to raise the idea: students have all too little time to get an education, without the distractions of such activities. Yet dissident students, like dissident professors, need the satisfaction of knowing that there are like-minded souls elsewhere. They require the sense of legitimacy that comes from being part of a community with shared values. I sincerely hope that if such an organization were founded (and I am not sure I am recommending it), it would confine itself, unlike both of its predecessors, to university affairs rather than national politics, and that it would resist the very politicization that would be one of its chief grievances.

IF LITTLE can be done about the university at large, something can be done about the enclaves within the university where the saving remnant is found, the oases where traditional study, teaching, and research are still being conducted. In some universities, they consist of nothing more than individual courses given by specific teachers (known to other students by word of mouth); in others, of a subfield within a department (the history of philosophy in the philosophy department); or of a one- or two-year concentration (on "Western Civilization," perhaps); or of a separate liberal-arts or humanities division (focusing on "great books").

Here we can exploit one of the vices of the modern university: greed. The university today is even more avaricious than it was in the 50's and 60's. As it has assumed the burden of more and more extracurricular activities, as its administration has proliferated (each new program spawning its own complement of deans, associate deans, assistant deans, administrative assistants, and secretaries), and as it is obliged to grant more generous scholarships to students and higher salaries to professors to fill its affirmative-action quotas (as well as offering above-scale salaries and minimal teaching assignments to attract the "academic superstars" in the fashionable fields), so it also finds itself, in this economy-minded era, with reduced funds from the government. Alumni and foundation support has therefore become more coveted than ever.

This is yet another reason to form "alternative" alumni organizations which can put financial, as well as intellectual, pressure upon the university. And it is also the reason that "alternative," as it were, foundations can exert an influence disproportionate to the funds actually expended.

The older, exceedingly well-endowed foundations (most notably, Ford and MacArthur) have long been active in financing "innovative" programs that have transformed the university. In response, smaller, more traditional-minded foundations have begun to support the programs of their liking. By a judicious use of their resources, these foundations can cultivate those oases where traditional study and teaching still flourish. (In more affluent days, universities were reluctant to accept outside support for restricted purposes; today they are more willing to do so.)

This proposal carries with it a strong caveat. Constant vigilance is required to make sure that the purpose of such grants is not subverted. My own experience on the council of the National Endowment for the Humanities is instructive. At a time when the Endowment was swamped with applications for Marxist, neo-Marxist, feminist, deconstructionist, and other modish projects, the chairman and staff devised a new program that would concentrate on the traditional works of philosophy, literature, and history. High-school teachers would be invited to apply to one of a number of summer courses, each led by a distinguished scholar and each devoted to the reading and study of a single great work—Plato's *Phaedo*, perhaps, or Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, or John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*.

It seemed a wonderful idea. Imagine how intellectually stimulating and spiritually refreshing it would be for a high-school teacher to return to the fount of wisdom after coping for years with teenagers and textbooks. The first round of seminars did exactly what we had hoped for and we were elated. The second year was something of a letdown; the books chosen by the instructors were not all of the highest quality and the approach to them was less rigorous. By the third summer, it was obvious that this program was going the way of all the others: the books were being Marxized, feminized, deconstructed, and politicized. High-school teachers, far from being exposed to "the best which has been thought and said in the world," were being indoctrinated in the prevailing dogmas of academia. With the best of intentions, the Endowment was disseminating—and, worse, legitimating—the very tendencies it was trying to counteract.

Michael Joyce, president of the Bradley Foundation, the wise man of the foundation world, taught me the lesson of this experience. When a garden consists of weeds rather than flowers, he said, the more one waters and fertilizes the garden, the more weeds one will get. So too, when the dominant culture of the university is degraded, everything that comes within its province (as the Endowment programs do, since they are dependent upon peer review by academics) will be susceptible of degradation.

This is a good argument against a publicly-funded Endowment. But it is also an argument for private foundations that have a clear conception of what they want to do and how they can best do it: by making grants not to the university,

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not even to a department, division, center, or institute, but to a particular individual or group for a specified purpose and for a limited time.

This "oasis" theory of reform is a very modest approach to a massive problem. It does not promise much, but what it promises, it can deliver. If watering and fertilizing a garden full of weeds has the effect of producing still more weeds, the watering and fertilizing of a flower bed in that garden will surely produce more flowers, and in time the flower bed itself will expand and displace some of those weeds. More important, the existence of those oases reminds us that there is a difference between flowers and weeds—a distinction that the prevalent relativism of our culture tends to obscure.

In offering nothing more than the most modest proposals for reform, I do not mean to belittle the gravity of the problem. For it is not only higher education that is at stake; it is all of education and the whole of the culture. Again, a personal experience may be illuminating.

Ten years ago, when the "new history"—social history, the history of ordinary people in their ordinary lives—was all the rage, I wrote an article deploring, not social history itself, but the dominance given to it, the claim that it was the most important mode of history, even the only proper mode, to the denigration or exclusion of political, diplomatic, even economic history.

To those who contended that I exaggerated the importance of social history, that it was confined to a few elite graduate schools, and that it did not affect the study of history in general, I cited some recent Advanced Placement examinations taken by high-school seniors. In one the main essay was, "How and why did the lives and status of Northern middle-class women change between 1776 and 1876?"; this was described in the bulletin of the American Historical Association as a "mainline topic." Another examination required the student to discuss methods of child-rearing in England between the 16th and 18th centuries. (These are high-school students who are barely familiar with the English Revolution, let alone with methods of child-rearing at that time—a subject that many a professor of English history, including the author of the present article, would hardly presume to comment on.)

Within a matter of years, this kind of history had filtered down from graduate schools to high schools, and had become "mainline" in all. It even penetrated the elementary schools. In my daughter's school, an ambitious young teacher (an ABD—All-But-Dissertation—from Harvard) devised a course for 6th-graders, their first in European history, on "the nature of revolutions," which had so little regard for chronology that at the end of the semester the students had no idea, as my daughter put it, "which came first," the French, Russian, or Industrial Revolution.

A more familiar example today is multiculturalism, which has permeated all educational institutions down to the very first grades. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in his aptly titled book *The Disuniting of America*, cites the New York State curriculum for "global studies," which calls for equal time to be devoted to seven specified regions of the world—this for students who are notoriously ignorant of the most elementary facts about their own country. (An official commission has recently criticized this program for its "European-American monocultural perspective.")

"Filtering down" is to education what "trickling down" is to economics. It is often said that the university is a microcosm of society and necessarily assumes the social obligations and political characteristics of society at large. A traditional view of the university rejects that theory, insisting upon the unique nature and function of the university. But if the university is not, and should not be, a microcosm of society, it is a microcosm of education. What happens in the university is apt to be replicated, and in a remarkably short time, at all levels—from graduate to undergraduate school and from high school to elementary school; from elite universities to state universities to small colleges; from the most avant-garde institutions to the most conventional ones.

This is hardly surprising. Teachers, after all, at all levels, come from the university, and they naturally bring to their jobs what they have learned, or imbibed by osmosis, from the university. (Professors in the smallest colleges are often most eager, as evidence of their professional credentials, to emulate and even surpass their colleagues in their enthusiasm for the latest intellectual fashion.)

The university is also a microcosm of culture—popular culture as well as high culture. Writers, journalists, moviemakers, television producers have also spent their formative years in the university. For their part, academics, having blurred the line between popular culture and high culture (or between popular culture and higher education), find it easy to import into the university the ideas, values, and the very subjects of popular culture. Films and television are respectable courses of study in most universities, and soap operas, comic strips, and advertising jingles are the solemn subjects of doctoral dissertations. It is a reciprocal process of legitimation that is taking place: the university legitimates the popular culture, and the popular culture legitimates the university that is so well disposed to it.

Lionel Trilling once expressed his misgivings at offering a course in modern literature (Joyce, Proust, Kafka, Lawrence, Mann, Gide) on the grounds that these writers were best read outside the university and that it was not the job of the

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university to make the students "at home in, and in control of, the modern world." Parents today might wonder if it is the job of the university to make their children even more at home than they already are in the world of television, the movies, videos, and comic books.

The popular culture does, however, suggest one final source of hope. Just as even the most successful TV serials have a life-span of only a few seasons, and the best-sellers of one year are relegated to the remainder tables the following year, so the intellectual and political fashions that prevail in the university today may suffer the fate of all fashions.

Robert Nisbet, who alerted us to the "degradation of the academic dogma," has written a short piece that may suggest to us (although it did not to him) a possible saving grace. His essay on "Boredom" opens: "Among the forces that have shaped human behavior, boredom is one of the most insistent and universal." Boredom—nothing so pretentious as "ennui," or "anomie," or even "apathy," but simple boredom. For Nisbet, boredom is an affliction, with no redeeming virtue. In our present condition, we may take a kindlier view of it.

Boredom has already overtaken some of yesterday's enthusiasms. In the age of deconstruction, who remembers existentialism? Deconstruction itself is already self-destructing in this country, as it did earlier in France. It takes only a few years for the "cutting edge" of a discipline to move to the center, lose its edge, and become dull.

Bright young academics, eager to make their mark, will seek new theories, new methods, new themes to assert their individuality and originality. They will even come to see their own mentors, the radicals of an earlier generation, as an establishment ripe for disestablishing. They may find, however, that the road to power is not as easy as they think. Establishments, especially those that have come to power with all the fervor and self-righteousness of radicals, do not readily relinquish power. It is many generations now since the disciples of John Dewey captured schools of education throughout the country. There have been serious efforts to discredit and dislodge their ideology, but by adapting to changing fashions (abandoning pluralism in favor of multiculturalism, for example), they have retained power even though pragmatism has long since become one of the most boring philosophies of our time.

Those committed to a traditional view of education can take small comfort in the volatility of fashions—not only because there are vested interests and institutional rigidities that make those fashions more enduring than they might otherwise be, but because there is no assurance that the succeeding ones will be any better than the old ones. (Deconstruction has all the defects of existentialism, and more.)

Nevertheless, this volatility does provide a window of opportunity for reform. Bored with trivia, with a specious relevance, with a smorgasbord of courses, with the politicization of all subjects and the fragmentation of all disciplines, professors and students might welcome a return to a serious, structured curriculum and to a university that is an intellectual and educational, not a political or therapeutic, community.

One can envision the sense of liberation that would be experienced by women and blacks released from the shackles of gender and race, free to participate in a culture that transcends the mundane conditions of their lives, that elevates and dignifies them because it is itself elevated and dignified. This is not a romantic or utopian suggestion. It is exactly what an earlier generation of students from poor, immigrant, and, often, culturally impoverished backgrounds felt when they gained admission to the university and discovered a new world, a world not bound or blinkered by their class or ethnic origins.

That was the old mission of the university. Today it is a new, bold, challenging mission, one that might well appeal to a new generation of enterprising, idealistic academics.

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What To Do About Education

2. *The Schools*

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

THE Clinton administration crowed this past spring about its success in getting Congress to enact an education-reform bill called Goals 2000. "Today will be remembered as the day the United States got serious about education," boasted the Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley, within hours of Senate passage. Persons acquainted with this measure only through its boosters' rhetoric might suppose that something important had happened, that the country had actually begun solving its persistent education problem.

Yet Goals 2000 is no great advance. It codifies in statute the national-education goals that President George Bush and the 50 governors set four years earlier. It creates a new federal council to "certify" education standards. And it offers droplets of federal funds to states and localities that take (federally-approved) steps to meet those standards.

In and of itself, this will cause few children to learn to spell, cipher, find Mexico on a world map, or comprehend the difference between phylum and species. More worrying, Goals 2000, particularly in concert with a far larger education bill nearing completion on Capitol Hill, could well make matters worse: chilling state and local innovation; intensifying federal regulation; discouraging testing and accountability measures; stocking the new national-standards council with "experts" and interest-group activists; creating plentiful opportunities for new litigation to redistribute education resources; focusing on school inputs (e.g., spending levels, class size, teacher training, textbooks) rather than pupil achievement; and signaling that Washington—rather than governors, community leaders, principals, parents—is the primary wellspring of change.

That scenario may be too gloomy. After all, past federal-education laws have had only a glancing impact on what is taught and how well it is learned in the nation's 100,000 schools. And because Goals 2000 has even more pig-in-a-poke features than past legislation, its long-term effects cannot be forecast with confidence. But one thing is certain: administration hyperbole notwithstanding, Goals 2000 (and its vast companion measure) will not *solve* the education problem and thus cannot accomplish its primary purpose.

The essence of that problem today, as for at least the past twenty years, is that young Americans are not learning enough for their own or the nation's good. The evidence is so bountiful that I have space for no more than a few examples:

- On a host of international comparisons, the achievement of U.S. youngsters is at the middle (in reading) or bottom (in science, math, geography) of the rankings—test after test, year after year.
- Though nearly all who complete high school acquire rudimentary literacy and numeracy skills, only a fraction has the intellectual candlepower sought by employers, colleges, and policy-makers. In 1993, the National Education Goals Panel reported that "fewer than one out of every five students in Grades 4 and 12 have met the Goals Panel's performance standard in mathematics. One out of every four 8th graders has met the standard."
- Even fewer young Americans acquire an education that could be termed "world class." Thus in 1993, out of every 1,000 high-school juniors and seniors, only 85 took Advanced Placement exams in English, math, science, and history, and only about two-thirds of these received passing scores.
- On a recent (1992) survey of adult literacy, just 11 percent of U.S. high-school graduates could accurately restate in writing the main point of a newspaper article.
- A rising proportion of what universities teach is remedial. Many students spend the first part of college acquiring skills and knowledge they should have gained in high school. (They spent much of high school on what they should have learned in grammar school.)
- Many employers say they cannot find people to hire who have the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and habits needed to do the work; the result is another huge investment in remediation—and the export of skilled jobs.

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THE main symptom of our education malady, without doubt, is the weak academic achievement revealed by the foregoing facts, even among those who complete formal schooling. To understand the disease itself, however, other elements must be considered, not least because they have much to do with why this ailment has proved so resistant to treatment. I count a dozen such elements:

First, the *equity issue.* Besides millions of middle-class children emerging half-ignorant from suburban schools, our system of education attempts to deal with hundreds of thousands of underclass youngsters whose lives are askew in myriad ways, including (but surely not limited to) the fact that they are not learning much in school—from which many, in any event, drop out. The education debate moves confusedly between these two problems, the solutions to which overlap but are not identical.

Moreover, many remedies for the problem of suburban schools (e.g., higher standards) are opposed because it is feared that they will cause more poor and minority youngsters to fail, even though there is no evidence for this. And the near-meltdown of some schools attended by disadvantaged children, especially urban high schools, is so alarming that it blinds many people to the extent and severity of the middle-class problem. Authors like Jonathan Kozol have won fame, fortune, and the adulation of the education fraternity by getting teary about the former problem while pooh-poohing the latter.

Second, the *schools' limited leverage.* Formal education occupies a surprisingly slender portion of our children's lives. The youngster who faithfully attends class six hours a day, 180 days a year, from kindergarten through 12th grade, will, at the age of eighteen, have spent just 9 percent of his hours on earth under the school roof. The other 91 percent is spent elsewhere.

Under optimal circumstances, quite a lot of science, literature, and geography can be learned in that 9 percent. But such circumstances rarely obtain, and even when they do, the school still lacks the power to prevent AIDS, stop drug abuse, reduce the rate of teen pregnancy, or substitute for family and church. Yet more and more such missions are thrust upon the school every year, sometimes by desperate policy-makers, sometimes by activists keen to enroll malleable youngsters in some cause. ("Environmental education" is big these days; so is "community service," often highly politicized by the likes of Ralph Nader, and recently turned into another new federal program called AmeriCorps.)

Third, the enterprise *lacks clear standards and expectations,* what businessmen call "product specifications." One reason American students do not learn what they ought to is that the education system is so nebulous about what it demands of them. If Goals 2000 does any good at all, it will be by legitimizing some national-achievement standards in core academic subjects. But few states and communities have yet specified the knowledge and skills that their youngsters should possess at the end of schooling, and few parents are clear about what and how much the schools expect their children to learn.

Worse, where states have tried to specify school "outcomes," the list usually turns out to be skimpy on fundamental knowledge and basic skills but lavish in its attention to attitudes, behavior, and interpersonal relations. This has then produced a political backlash against the very notion of standards, even in such "progressive" jurisdictions as Minnesota and Connecticut.

Fourth, we possess *little reliable information about results.* Not only have we had difficulty locating a clear destination for the education vehicle; we also have immense trouble erecting readable mileposts along the journey. The nationwide data are pretty good, but in most communities one cannot obtain timely, intelligible information about how well one's own children are learning, how their school is doing in relation to other schools, and how the community and state are performing in comparison with the rest of the country and the world.

Several factors have caused this data drought: testing is unpopular among educators (and civil-rights and child-advocacy groups, etc.); many of today's tests yield incomplete and misleading information; much of what one would like to know (particularly about the performance of individual children, classrooms, teachers, and schools) is never gathered; what is available rarely lends itself to comparisons; and nobody is responsible for an independent "audit" of educational results. Meanwhile, we are awash in data about spending, class size, and other "input-and-service" gauges beloved by educators.

FIFTH, young people see *few real consequences.* Even while lamenting the shoddiness of their applicants' preparation, not many universities and employers discriminate between those who take hard courses, learn a lot, and do well in school, and those who choose the path of least resistance, scrape by with C's, and learn very little. Only a small fraction of young people even applies to the handful of competitive colleges where prior academic performance makes a big difference. For the rest, the "real world" seems not to care much whether they hit the books or play around. (The practice of "social promotion" conveys much the same message to younger pupils.)

Children and adolescents being, in their way, rational creatures, it stands to reason that few see an imperative to study hard. To his credit, Albert Shanker, the president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), has tirelessly pointed to the "low-stakes" nature of American education as one of the leading causes of its mediocrity. Yet Goals 2000 bars the use of federal funds for

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"high-stakes" testing, and the federal Office for Civil Rights is harassing Ohio for tying consequences (receipt of a high-school diploma) to its own state tests.

Sixth, there is *no systemic accountability.* As former Secretary of Education William J. Bennett has noted, there are "greater, more certain, and more immediate penalties in this country for serving up a single rotten hamburger in a restaurant than for repeatedly furnishing a thousand schoolchildren with a rotten education." And as another former Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander, has observed, "Teaching is the only profession in which you are not paid one extra cent for being good at your job." Those managing the education system slough off all accountability for that system's results, good or bad. No rewards come to the successful, or unpleasantness to those who fail. This is partly because—

Seventh, *power rests with the producers, not the consumers.* One might suppose that "public" education was designed to serve the public interest and to account to the public for its performance. But one would be wrong. Most effective power today resides within the education establishment, an interlocked directorate that includes the two big teachers' unions, the National Education Association (NEA) and the AFT (much the most potent and reactionary forces in U.S. education today); principals and superintendents; a dozen other employee groups; surprisingly docile state and local school boards; textbook and test publishers; and colleges of education. Even groups that we might expect to look after "consumer interests" are coopted. Thus, the PTA serves primarily the interests of educators; business groups entrust responsibility for school reform to establishment fellow-travelers; and many legislative education committees are chaired by present or former educators (whose candidacies were generously assisted by the teachers' unions, etc.).

Eighth, that same school establishment enjoys *near-monopoly control.* In any community, there is but one public-school system, attendance is mandatory, and the particular school a youngster attends is normally assigned by someone downtown. Only the well-to-do can loosen the monopoly's grip by taking up residence in another jurisdiction or paying for their children to attend private schools.

Monopolies, as we know, are seldom responsive to consumer preferences; *government* monopolies are even less so. Nor are they inclined to relent. This is why even such canny reformers as the Wisconsin legislator Polly Williams and Governor John Engler of Michigan have had huge difficulty in extending the principle of school choice. It is also why the education establishment threw millions of dollars against the California voucher referendum in 1993.

Ninth, not surprisingly, *education decision-making is gridlocked.* The monopoly's chief goals are to preserve itself, its clout, and the status quo that it embodies; to increase the resources at its disposal; and to ensure that each constituent part retains its share of power, status, and money. Moreover, the complex layering of local, state, and federal regulations, the bloated, lethargic bureaucracies that run the school system, and the so-called "stakeholder" groups that must assent before any change is made—all these forces make for inertia, repel reformers, and allow each part of the system to blame others. It is a vast "no-fault" enterprise.

Tenth, we are afflicted by what might be termed *retail complacency.* Most Americans think their own school is fine, even if "the nation is at risk." On the 1994 Gallup education survey, for example, just 22 percent of respondents gave honors grades to "the nation's public schools," while 70 percent conferred high marks on "the school your oldest child attends." This discrepancy arises from many sources, including the falsely positive reports pumped out by local and state education systems, the inability of parents and taxpayers to get reliable outcomes data that they can compare to standards, and, perhaps, a disinclination to alter our own ways. The upshot is that most people seem to think the necessary reforming should happen across town.

ELEVENTH, our *schools were designed for the 19th century.* Even our "good" schools are not nearly so effective as they should be, because practically all of them follow an archaic formula. This is true of private and public institutions alike. (Private schools do produce somewhat better results, but their margin is surprisingly thin.) We have a school year shaped for the agrarian age; a school day built for the era when most mothers were home at 3 P.M.; primitive instructional technology; obsolete notions of how children learn; dull materials; a bureaucratic-management system that prizes uniformity and conformity; and a tendency to judge quality by how many adults are present and what services they provide rather than by what children actually learn. The model itself is woefully antiquated.

Finally, *the education profession is awash in bad ideas.* By and large, educators—at least many of the so-called leaders and experts among them—swear by precepts that have placed us at risk. Among these precepts:

- There is really not much wrong with the schools.
- Whatever may be wrong is the fault of the larger society (parents, TV, Republicans, etc.).
- Competition (among students, schools, states, countries, etc.) is harmful.
- Knowledge is passé; what matters are "cognitive skills."
- A child's sense of "self-esteem" counts more than what he knows.
- What children should learn—and from whom—depends on their race and ethnicity.

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• Students should never be grouped for instruction according to their ability or prior achievement.

• Only graduates of teacher-training programs should be permitted in the classroom, and none but products of administrator-training programs should be allowed to lead schools or school systems.

But the main precept by which the education establishment and its friends in high places swear is that the ills of American education, such as they are, can be cured by generous applications of money. One difficulty with this prescription is that it is expensive. Another is that, for the most part, it is wrong.

There is no doubt that some school systems are impoverished. Nor is there any doubt that some teachers are not paid enough. (Some, however, may be overcompensated for the results they produce.) Some schools have leaky roofs, antiquated textbooks, dank gyms, and no Bunsen burners in their chemistry labs. And certainly there are sizable fiscal discrepancies among communities and among states.

Nevertheless, American education, taken as a whole, is spending plenty of money. Per-pupil expenditures in the public schools have tripled *in real terms* since the 1950's, have doubled since the mid-60's (when, by most gauges, our troubles began), and rose by about a third during the Reagan-Bush years of the 80's. Teachers' salaries went up 27 percent (in real terms) during that same decade. Meanwhile, class sizes have fallen: the median U.S. elementary classroom had 30 students in 1961, 24 in 1986. The public schools employed six adults for every 100 children in 1960, ten in 1981, and eleven in 1990.

As for international comparisons (a statistical swamp), U.S. public expenditures per pupil for kindergarten-through-12th-grade education surpass those of such allies and competitors as Japan, Germany, Britain, France, and Canada. A study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that, in 1991, the U.S. spent 7 percent of its gross domestic product on public and private education at all levels, exceeded only by Canada. And, at 14.7 percent, we are one of the top three nations in spending on public education as a percentage of total public outlays, tied with Finland and surpassed only by Switzerland.

Yes, some of the changes we may need to make (e.g., a longer school year) are apt to carry a price tag. But the prior questions to ask are why we are not getting a better return on the money we are already spending, and whether, as our education outlays continue to rise (a seemingly ineluctable trend), we will find ourselves plowing the extra money into more of the same. As the economist Eric Hanushek concludes in a forthcoming book: "Strong evidence shows that continuing the policies of the past is extraordinarily expensive and unproductive. Expanding upon them would be worse."

THAT it is hard to solve this tangled nest of problems is abundantly clear. The politics of education are as intractable as any in the land. To implement change may be even more daunting, considering the vastness, sluggishness, decentralization, and ingrained beliefs of this huge enterprise and the layers of contract, custom, ideology, regulation, and law that envelop it.

Yet it is not difficult to imagine what a radically improved education system would look like. So long as we beware the simplistic "magic potion"—the single treatment that would supposedly fix everything—we can even visualize how the main reforms that need to be made would reinforce each other. As I see it, six of these are key.

Power. We need major shifts of authority and control over resources from producers to consumers and from experts to civilians. That entails cracking the establishment monopoly, and giving parents, voters, taxpayers, elected officials, and community leaders far greater say over what schools must accomplish, how they will be held accountable for doing this, and how children and schools will be matched to one another. The professionals should retain responsibility—and gain greater authority—for decisions about the *means* of education, but the laity needs to determine its *ends*. And those ends must serve the interests of consumers, not providers.

Such a shift of attitude, priority, and authority is the prerequisite for everything else. It may lead us to new forms of educational governance—for instance, handing control of the education system directly to mayors, city councils, governors, and legislatures rather than the semi-autonomous board-and-superintendent structure that prevails in most places. (Most of the boldest reforms in U.S. education today are the work of "outsiders" like Governor William Weld of Massachusetts and Mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore.)

The needed power shift may also mean breaking vast school systems into smaller and more manageable units—and perhaps consolidating some tiny, dysfunctional units. It surely includes allowing individual schools to make many decisions heretofore made by bureaucracies, deeper involvement of parents in school governance, and far greater accountability on the part of managers at each level for quality and efficacy.

Above all, the needed power shift means knocking the props out from under the monopoly; enabling people to select from among alternatives; ending coercive assignment of pupils to schools; rewarding (with students, money, etc.) those schools and educators that do a good enough job to attract "clients"; and ending the disgraceful custom of guaranteeing pupils—and the resources and jobs that accompany them—to bad schools that would sit empty if people could vote with their feet.

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Standards. Any well-functioning enterprise begins with clarity about its expectations. Successful institutions can describe with fair precision what they are trying to accomplish, what their markers of quality are, and by what indicators they determine how they are faring. So, too, with education. The quality revolution must start by spelling out what young Americans will know and be able to do if the schools perform their job properly.

At a minimum, this means ambitious high-school-graduation standards that consist not of courses taken or time spent but of demonstrable skills and knowledge. These must be supported by synchronized standards at several check points along the way. The six national education goals set by President Bush and the 50 governors in 1989—including the specification of five core subjects and check points at grades 4, 8, and 12—were a good start down this path. (Regrettably, the mangling—and expanding—that the goals received from Congress this year leaves them rather less satisfactory.)

Current efforts by national-professional associations of "subject-matter" experts may help flesh out these expectations, though we ought not expect too much from this process. (Some stress "thinking skills" and downplay knowledge; others tend toward political correctness; and—in addition to the core subjects of English, math, science, history, and geography—these efforts now include such dubious entrants as "social studies" and "teaching English as a second language.")

But *national* standards are not the point. They are not essential. They may even turn out to be harmful. In any case, what is done at the national level matters far less than the goals and standards spelled out by each state and locality. If they are to be enforceable, they must be set by those with real authority over schooling, which again means states and localities. And if community concerns about such touchy matters as values and character are to be resolved in acceptable fashion, it is also at the local level that they must be worked out.

This is an arduous process, to be sure, and one that policy-makers dare not hand over to education "experts." Taxi drivers, thoracic surgeons, accountants, and clergymen should have at least as much to say about what the children of their communities need to know and be able to do as curriculum directors, university professors, and teachers' unions. But there is no need to start from scratch. Much good material is at hand—like E.D. Hirsch's grade-by-grade sourcebooks on "cultural literacy"—and more appears daily.

Accountability. For standards to have a real impact, we need good tests and other assessments of student and school performance vis-à-vis those standards. We need trustworthy information about how we are doing. And we need accountability mechanisms that include real stakes and consequences for everyone involved.

No enterprise that has avoided accountability up to now will welcome its imposition. Countless reasons will be given as to why it is unfair, even cruel, to hold anyone responsible for his own or anybody else's results. The opponents of testing will also raise a thousand objections to the use of any given measuring tool. (The federal intervention in Ohio's graduation test is based on slightly discrepant passing rates by black and white youngsters.) It will take great determination to break through all this.

A true system of accountability has several essentials: exams that mirror the desired goals and standards of the state or community; a blend of teacher-designed assessments (vital for diagnosis and classroom correction) and external tests, prepared and administered—like an independent audit—by people other than the school system's own managers; speed and intelligibility of test results, together with their comparability over time and across jurisdictions; and the employment of other gauges of success, such as attendance, graduation rates, and the incidence of discipline problems.

The purpose is not bean-counting. It is to alter pupil and educator behavior so as to produce better results. Which means that *stakes and consequences* must be tied to those results. This implies, for one thing, that students should be promoted (or graduated) only when they have met specified standards, that universities should adopt explicit (and unvarying) admissions standards, and that employers should do likewise. But consequences should not apply only to the students. Teachers, principals, superintendents, and other responsible adults should also be rewarded for success, penalized for failure, and—ultimately—dismissed if they or their institutions cannot get the job done.

Supply-side pluralism. All schools should embrace a common core of skills and knowledge, but they should also be encouraged to vary along other dimensions. Children differ in learning styles, temperament, and personal preference. Families differ in the educational experiences they want for their children (particularly in such domains as values, ethics, and character). Educators differ in philosophy, passion, and expertise. Communities, states, and regions have distinctive traditions, priorities, and concerns. America is too big and diverse a country to expect a single educational model to fit everyone.

Hence, rather than trying to standardize our schools, shackling them with regulations, and punishing them for deviating, we should welcome educational pluralism and the freedom and competition that accompany it. Let schools vie with one another on the basis of their distinctive features; let them do all they can to attract students and families—and to satisfy those they attract.

In addition, we should encourage diverse "proprietors" to create and manage schools. It is time, as the Minnesota analyst Ted Kolderie says,

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to "withdraw the exclusive franchise." Instead of supposing that all public schools must be the creatures of large, bureaucratic systems, we should encourage entrepreneurship by teachers and other educators, by various public and private institutions, even by the business sector. And instead of awarding geographic monopolies to particular schools or systems, let them compete on one another's turf. Define a public school not as something administered in uniform fashion by a government agency but, rather, as a school that *serves* the public, that accepts the core standards adopted by its state or community, and that agrees to be accountable for its results.

The appetite for such innovation is vast. Though the Massachusetts legislature—heavily lobbied by teachers' unions, school boards, and administrators—limited to 25 the number of "charter" schools* that could be started under the Commonwealth's reform law, on the day that charter proposals were due, state Education Secretary Piedad Robertson received 64 such requests. More have since flooded in.

Educational diversity also means welcoming the creation of "break-the-mold" schools based on wholly different models of what a first-class education might be. Some of the Massachusetts charter schools promise to incorporate new designs when they open in 1995. So do the nine projects supported by the New American Schools Development Corporation, the Edison Project (with which I have been associated), the Coalition of Essential Schools, and other public and private ventures. A true revolution in education means more than fixing up the schools we already have; it also means creating schools we have never before imagined.

Demand-side choice. School choice is no panacea but it *is* the essential lubricant of a reformed education system. Families must be able to select their schools from among all available offerings. They must have the right to leave one school for another if they change their minds. And the array of schools from which they may choose should be as broad and variegated as possible.

Myriad details must of course be worked out as education shifts from a monopoly-and-coercion system to one based on pluralism-and-choice. Nor, given our constitutional history and political sensitivities, is it a simple matter to decide whether all extant private schools, including church-affiliated institutions, should be able to participate in a tax-funded choice system. But it is not difficult to establish some crucial precepts by which educational choice should operate.

Begin by redefining public schools in the manner suggested above, then granting private schools the right to "opt in" so long as they are willing to accept public standards, accountability, and a modicum of regulation. But they must also be free, if they prefer, to remain wholly private, unregulated, and unsubsidized. Parents, too, need the right to educate their children at home if they wish. Whether or not this is wise education policy, home-schooling is a needed escape valve for social and political steam.

Regulations for participating schools should be kept to a minimum: health, safety, nondiscrimination, accountability for results, financial probity, and not much more. But any marketplace works best when the customers have ample information about alternatives. In education, it is the public's proper business to ensure that such information is accurate. Especially valuable are "school report cards" that parents can understand. Some families will also benefit from help in analyzing such information and making decisions.

As with testing, the opponents of choice throw up a hundred reasons why it should not even be tried and insist that dozens of conditions be met in advance. A few such conditions are reasonable—working out a transportation arrangement, for example—and advocates should try to meet them. But the critics will never be content. They demand that proponents of new arrangements meet far more exacting standards than ever are laid on the status quo. Reformers should therefore concentrate on establishing the principle of choice—without losing another decade.

Professionalism. No school is ultimately better than the people who work in it. Great educators, accordingly, are a precious asset, worth locating, engaging, rewarding, and retaining. They should be treated as professionals, not as hired hands. In return, they must conduct themselves like professionals, which is a long way indeed from the behaviors typically displayed at the collective-bargaining table.

Professionalism involves ceding to individual schools a wide array of decisions historically made "downtown," including matters of instruction, staffing, resource allocation, schedule, school "climate," and discipline. So long as these decisions yield the desired results—and the customers are satisfied—the school's staff should be free to organize itself and its work as it thinks best.

Outstanding educators can be found in many places, not just among graduates of teacher-and-administrator training programs. Multiple paths into the classroom (and principal's office) need to exist, including ready entry for capable but inexperienced individuals who know their subjects, want to teach children, have sound character, and are prepared to learn on the job. The states that have already adopted "alternative-certification" schemes have made a start on this.

Once hired, one's compensation should be based on the effectiveness of one's performance, as well as the scarcity of one's specialty, the complexity of one's assignment, the breadth of one's

* Charter schools are independent public schools, often run by a group of teachers or parents, innovative (or traditional) in content, and free from most regulations and external controls.

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responsibilities, and the difficulty of one's work environment. Uniform salary schedules that treat everyone alike, whether good, bad, or mediocre, have no place in any true profession.

Similarly, a professional needs opportunities to remain current in his subject and up-to-date on broader developments in education. Our institutional arrangements must provide for these, as well as for reasonable vacations, sabbaticals, etc. But professionals must also expect to work year-round and all day—and to take work home with them at night.

Those who falter should have a chance to solve their problem. But if it remains unsolved, they have no right to continue engaging in educational malpractice. This enterprise must run for the benefit of its customers, not its producers. Practices such as lifetime tenure are antithetical to bona-fide professionalism.

It is conceivable that the teachers' unions could transform themselves into professional associations that could live with these precepts.* But in most places the unions are throwing their considerable might against such changes and therefore must be combated through all available means. What counts is not what Albert Shanker and his NEA counterpart Keith Geiger write in their paid newspaper columns; it is what their hundreds of state and local affiliates do at the statehouse and the bargaining table.

Obvious as these recipes may seem, few are cooking from them today. The entrenched forces of the status quo contend that radical change is unnecessary, even damaging to "public education as we know it." Furnish them with more time, more money, more leverage, better parents, and a society more committed to education, and whatever may be awry today can—so they tell us—easily be set right tomorrow.

Better still, they would have us believe, the added resources will enable them to broaden the school's responsibilities to include day care, birth control, drug-abuse prevention, health care, and suchlike. That the essential nature of "public education as we know it" is itself a large part of what is amiss is, not surprisingly, quite beyond their ken.

Meanwhile, the Clinton administration and its acolytes murmur that Uncle Sam will take care of everything, so long as everyone does what he says. From time to time, they give a rhetorical boost to ideas like charter schools, even the private management of public schools. (To the astonishment of his staff and the consternation of his union allies, the President personally penned such an endorsement into the 1994 State of the Union address.) But the administration's main education strategy is for the federal government to solve most of what is wrong via something it calls "systemic reform," by which it means an array of spending programs, regulations, and "state plans" subject to approval by the Secretary of Education. Though committed to goals and standards, the administration is also bestowing renewed credibility on inputs and services, and it steadfastly refuses to attach real stakes or consequences to student results.

The giant Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization nearing completion in Congress makes further mischief. In addition to what has already been noted about it above, the version passed by the House of Representatives emasculates the independent, nonpartisan governing board that supervises the "national assessment of educational progress." It turns this sensitive testing program over to political appointees and government careerists disposed to probe deeply for revealing "family-background" data (one way to let schools off the hook) and to adjust test results to compensate for state differences in racial composition.

But Washington is not the only arena where the principles of sound reform are under fierce assault. Nor does the attack come only from the Left. "Silver-bullet" conservatives would have us believe that school vouchers, enabling people to attend private schools at public expense, are both necessary and sufficient to reform U.S. education. In recent months, they have trumpeted that conviction from California to Michigan, from Phoenix to Harrisburg.

Unfortunately, the voucher enthusiasts are only half correct. Wide-ranging choice among schools is indispensable, and—thanks to both the fervor of its advocates and its popularity among parents, especially those trapped in urban school systems—we are going to see more and more of it. But vouchers cannot do the job alone. Not, in any case, so long as there is no parallel supply-side effort to diversify, modernize, and deregulate our essentially uniform schools, private as well as public, and not so long as we have no clear "product specifications," no good consumer information, and no accountability mechanisms other than the marketplace.

Also firing from the Right—and one of the most worrisome developments of the past few years—is a tireless cadre of people who are striving to obliterate the theory and practice of "outcomes-based" education. They are right to be upset, yet their alternative would set back the cause of educational excellence a long way.

There are really only two ways to gauge educational quality and efficacy: in relation to school inputs or in relation to pupil achievement. Either we judge a school by what is learned there, or we inevitably find ourselves evaluating it by how much is spent there—or by kindred measures such as hours devoted, courses taken, and the ratio of teachers to pupils.

It was our decades-long preoccupation with inputs that placed the U.S. at educational risk

* See my article, "Teacher Politics," in the February 1983 COMMENTARY.

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and forced belated attention to goals, standards, and results. As elected officials and business leaders came to realize in the mid-80's that added expenditures were not getting us anywhere, and that clarity about standards and accountability for results were vital ingredients of the reform recipe, they took steps to refocus the debate from inputs to outcomes. The national-education goals adopted by President Bush and the governors (and now enshrined in Goals 2000) are the most conspicuous legacy of this changed way of thinking. But even more important decisions were made at the state level, where one legislature, commissioner of education, or state board of education after another decreed that precise standards would be set forth, that children must study until they meet those standards, and that schools and their employees would henceforth be judged by their effectiveness in producing that result. Variants of that policy are now law in South Carolina and Florida, in California and Michigan, in Colorado and Illinois, in Kentucky and Pennsylvania, and in many other jurisdictions.

So far, so good. But the devil lurks in the details. Proclaiming that there shall be standards is not the same as spelling them out and, more often than not, responsibility for doing that was handed to educators with a radically different conception of what school is for and which results are desirable. Rather than itemizing the basic skills and knowledge that well-educated children should be able to demonstrate in core academic subjects, the lists of outcomes that were actually drafted had more to do with social attitudes, ideological positions, and interpersonal relations. Sometimes this was the product of committees and task forces created within the state; sometimes it came from itinerant vendors of prepackaged "outcomes-based" programs, strategies, and curricula that are heavy on what educators call the "transformational" role of schooling and light on the "three R's" that are what most legislators, parents, and taxpayers have in mind.

This development was bound to alarm many parents, particularly when such dubious outcomes were mandated for all schools and children in the state. It is one thing for a private school or charter school to be forthright about instilling values and attitudes in its students. Nobody is forced to sign up for such a school. But it is another matter altogether when a *state* decrees that nobody can graduate from any of the schools within its borders before acquiring and demonstrating certain values and attitudes.

When the neighborhood school teaches children behaviors or beliefs that parents deem abhorrent, even sacrilegious, those parents can be expected to become forceful in trying to alter the situation, the more so if they have no exit to another school that is closer to their world view. The result, beginning in Pennsylvania but rapidly spreading across the land, has been a storm of protest against outcomes-based education.

The protesters' position has considerable merit. But it must also be noted that, for some people of a fundamentalist orientation, schools err when they teach children to reason independently, think critically, or weigh evidence objectively. While one can share the dismay of parents over a state-sanctioned educational institution teaching doctrines that offend their deepest beliefs, one cannot agree that schools, especially public schools, should forgo all "higher-order" intellectual skills. This conflict poses one of the most vexing dilemmas of contemporary education policy.

Because of these disputes, even the word "outcomes" has become tainted, and most prudent policy-makers and elected officials now eschew it. School inputs are getting a new lease on life, thanks to a wholly unexpected (and surely unintended) marriage of political convenience between fundamentalist parents and an accountability-averse education establishment.

But we will be making a big mistake if we turn away from setting goals and standards or from the principle that students, educators, and schools must account for their performance vis-à-vis those standards. Perhaps the conflict can be modulated by recalling several ingredients of the reform recipe outlined above: "compulsory" outcomes that are confined to a core list of broadly accepted skills and knowledge; families encouraged to choose from an increasingly varied array of schools that approach that core (and other matters) via different routes; and private schools and home-schoolers free to shun even those elements of the academic core that clash with their beliefs.

WHAT has been recommended here is conceptually straightforward, even obvious, but politically it constitutes an immense undertaking. Elected officials and community leaders who seek conscientiously to solve the nation's education problem will have to take on one of the largest and most entrenched sets of interest groups in the land. They will also have to urge a series of changes in attitude and practice that will not prove universally popular among their constituents, particularly those who find their complacency jarred or lives altered by the need to face the education music in their own households and local schools.

There are two reasons why this is worth doing anyway. First, as a matter of politics, it is clear from innumerable surveys that most Americans do agree in principle with the measures suggested here. With the benefit of time, leadership, and accurate information, they are likely to come around in practice as well.

Second, as a matter of public policy, nothing is more fundamental or important than education, save for national defense. In truth, a sound education system can fairly be termed the domestic equivalent of a strong national defense. Getting such a system will take vision, courage, and persistence. But the rewards will be immense.

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The Jihad Against the Jews

Martin Kramer

On July 18, a ferocious bomb explosion ripped through the seven-story building at 633 Pasteur Street, in the traditionally Jewish quarter of Buenos Aires. The building completely collapsed, and the final death count reached 95 persons. It was Argentina's worst terrorist attack.

In many ways this strike resembled the bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires in March 1992, which left 29 people dead. That earlier bombing immediately followed Israel's assassination in south Lebanon of the secretary-general of Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Shiite "Party of God." Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah's clandestine branch, made a convincing claim of responsibility for the embassy bombing, although the Argentine authorities never picked up its trail.

The attack in July, as the chief U.S. counterterrorism official later put it, also had "the hallmarks of a Hezbollah operation." It likewise seemed to be an act of revenge, perhaps for an accumulation of grievances: the massacre of Muslim worshippers in Hebron's mosque by an Israeli settler; or Israel's June raid on a Hezbollah base deep in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, which killed nearly 30 trainees.

The technique of the massive car bomb, so reminiscent of Beirut, was also identical in both instances, and pointed in the direction of Muslim extremists generally, and Hezbollah in particular. While Argentina has over 30 neo-Nazi and far-Right movements, which presumably would wish Israel and the Jews harm, the quantity of explosives and the method of delivery guaranteed that the dying would be indiscriminate. Indeed, nearly a third of those killed were non-Jewish passersby. Resort to such a technique required not only a determination to destroy the target, but a total lack of regard for the inevitable "collateral damage." It seemed probable that only complete outsiders would be willing to kill Argentines so randomly in order to get at their target.

Yet for all their similarities, this latest bombing differed in a crucial respect from its predecessor: it was directed not at Israelis but at Jews as such. No Israeli agencies operated from the building on Pasteur Street. The devastated structure housed the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA), the main organizational body of the Buenos Aires Jewish Community, which had just marked its centennial; and the Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA), the organizational umbrella of Argentine Jewry, established over 60 years ago. The building included everything from social-aid offices, where the elderly collected pensions, to the archives of AMIA and the records of the city's *hevra kedisha*, its burial society.

The choice of a Jewish target was no mistake. It came as the culmination of a shift in the thinking of many Muslim fundamentalists. Today they are in thrall to the idea that Jews everywhere, in league with Israel, are behind a sinister plot to destroy Islam. The battleground is anywhere Jews are organized to assist and aid in this plot.

This is a new concept even for Islamic fundamentalism, and it represents an especially virulent form of anti-Semitism, one so widespread and potentially violent that it could eclipse all other forms of anti-Semitism over the next decade.

Religious prejudice always colored the traditional Islamic view of the Jews, but it also affected Muslim attitudes to Christians and all other nonbelievers. Most importantly, Muslims did not consider Jews a race apart. They regarded Jews as forming a community of belief—an errant belief, to be sure, but one entitled to a large measure of toleration.

Modern anti-Semitism in Muslim lands dates only from about the beginning of this century, following the spread of European racial theories. The idea of the Jews as a band of conspirators came to Muslim lands largely through the translation of anti-Semitic texts into Arabic, and above all *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Europe's anti-Semitism, like its nationalism, had an immense impact on Muslim thinking, persuading many Muslims that the Jews did constitute a distinct race, whose members had always been treacherous in all places and at all times, because it was in their fundamental nature to be so.

Not surprisingly, European-inspired racial anti-Semitism reached the height of its influence with the genocidal Nazi war against the Jews. In the 1930's and 1940's, Arab-nationalist leaders found

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support and then refuge in Berlin, and Arabic translations of *Mein Kampf* and the *Protocols* enjoyed their widest circulation.

These ideas persisted into the postwar period, when Jews were forced from Arab lands. Despite their deep roots in these lands, Arab nationalist dogma drew on the anti-Semitic doctrines of Europe to portray the Jews as aliens in every place, at every time. The Arab nationalists claimed that the hearts and minds of all Jews belonged ultimately to the new state of Israel, and so any Jew could be held accountable for the supposed sins of the Jewish state. This provided the legitimation for the mass expulsion of Jews from Arab lands in the 1950's. There were once 800,000 Jews in the Arab world; today there are only about 20,000, most of them in Morocco.

Arab anti-Semitism took on a new guise in the 1960's and 1970's, under the impact of the fashionable anti-Zionism of the Left. While denying any anti-Semitic prejudice, the new "anti-Zionists" also denied Jews the right to self-definition as a nation. The Jews had wronged all mankind by deciding that they constituted a nation, and then by creating Israel in the heartland of another nation.

It followed that the only solution to the Jewish problem was denationalization, to be achieved by the defeat and dismantlement of the state of Israel and the return of the Jews whence they came. It was an idea that dovetailed nicely with the growing influence of Soviet and New Left anti-Zionism, and reached its apex with the "Zionism is racism" resolution of the UN General Assembly.

Throughout these many changing fads of Arab anti-Semitism, however, an earlier generation of Muslim fundamentalists still adhered to a strict reading of the Islamic tradition. Their attitude to the Jews rested not upon the imported European doctrines of race and nation, which they rejected, but upon religion. As careful readers of their own texts, they knew that the Qu'ran faulted the Jews of Muhammad's time for failing to recognize his prophethood. But they did not understand this as a lesson on the character of Jews in all times and places.

Nor did these more traditional fundamentalists hold the Jews to be a conspiratorial race, or subscribe to any of the various solutions, from expulsion to extermination, held out by European example. In their view, Islam provided the perfect solution to the Jewish problem: the creation of an Islamic state, which would accord Jews the status of an autonomous, protected religious community. Their model was the *dhimma*, the covenant of submission and protection offered to Jews and Christians during the first Islamic conquests.

This view still allowed for a distinction between Judaism and Zionism and, by extension, between Jews and Israelis. An example of fundamentalist rigor on this point could be found in the thought of the late Ismail Faruqi of Temple University in Philadelphia, a Palestinian fundamentalist of the old school. Faruqi regarded anti-Semitism as one more European disease which Muslims had caught by sleeping with the West, and which a return to true Islam would eradicate. "There cannot be any doubt that the Jew is a sufferer of injustice at the hands of the Christian West," admitted Faruqi, rejecting the idea that the Jews were everywhere evil and deserving of retribution. As Faruqi saw it, "Islam offers a perfect solution to the Jewish problem which has beset the Jews and the West for two millennia," since it would allow Jews complete communal and religious autonomy, and the right to reside anywhere in the ideal Islamic state.

Of course, Faruqi went on to add a crucial punch line: "The Islamic position leaves no chance for the Zionist state but to be dismantled and destroyed, and its wealth confiscated to pay off its liabilities." But Faruqi never would have conceived of the conflict with Israel as entailing a global struggle between Islam and Judaism.

FARUQI's idea that "the relation of Islam to Judaism is one of sympathy, even identity" would appall the new generation of Muslim fundamentalists who have emerged since the 1980's. Many of them have been thoroughly imbued with imported doctrines of anti-Semitism. Some are born-again Muslims, ill-acquainted with Islamic tradition, who often see Islam only as an ideology of power.

These new fundamentalists deemphasize the long history of Islamic tolerance of the Jews across centuries and continents, fixating instead upon the early conflict between Muhammad and the Jewish tribes of 7th-century Arabia. The Jews who clashed with Muhammad are presented as archetypes of a universal Jew, treacherous by nature, whose perfidy threatens not only Islam but all humanity.

In this discourse, which purports to be the authentic voice of Islam, all manner of themes and sources intermingle. Verses from the Qu'ran abut quotations from the *Protocols*. The role of the Jews in Arabia of the 7th century is compared with the alleged international power of the Jews in the late 20th. And in this collapsing of sources and history, another distinction—between anti-Zionism and anti-Judaism—is lost. The fundamentalist arguments mobilized against the state of Israel are invariably arguments against the Jews in general.

In short, the Islamic fundamentalist position has now been thoroughly penetrated by classic European anti-Semitism. This has been facilitated by the fact that so many fundamentalist thinkers of the present generation have spent time in the West, collecting advanced degrees at the universities of London and Paris. There they internalized

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the anti-Semitism of the extreme Left and Right, and they now retail a comprehensive indictment of the Jews which goes far beyond anti-Zionism. Their tales of unbridled Jewish power enjoy even more credibility among their listeners at home, since they can claim to have seen and experienced it firsthand. They wax persuasive when they declare that an international Jewish conspiracy stands behind Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, or the fall of the Muslim-owned Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI).

Consider the spiritual mentor of Hezbollah in Lebanon, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, whose teeming flock overflows into Beirut's streets to hear his mosque sermon each Friday. According to Fadlallah, "The struggle against the Jewish state, in which the Muslims are engaged, is a continuation of the old struggle of the Muslims against the Jews' conspiracy against Islam." Muslims now face

> a world Jewish movement working to deprive Islam of its positions of actual power—spiritually, on the question of Jerusalem; geographically, on the question of Palestine; politically, by bringing pressures to block Islam's movement at more than one place; and economically, in an effort to control Islam's economic potential and resources, in production and consumption.

Fadlallah thus rejects the argument, which is still made by some nationalists and fundamentalists, that Israel is but an instrument of American imperialism. "The Jews want to be a world superpower. . . . No one should imagine that the Jews act on behalf of any super or minor power. It is their personality to make for themselves a future world presence." The very purpose of Israel is to bring "all the Jews in the world to this region, to make it the nucleus for spreading their economic and cultural domination."

For Fadlallah, then, Israel is "not merely a group that established a state at the expense of a people. It is a group which wants to establish Jewish culture at the expense of Islamic culture." Here is a view of Muslims and Jews locked in a timeless and total confrontation, until one completely subjugates the other.

Along with this notion has come the idea that Jews everywhere are Israel's co-conspirators in a plot against Islam. A leading protagonist of this idea is Rashid al-Ghannushi, the exiled leader of al-Nahda, the banned Tunisian fundamentalist movement.

Last year, Ghannushi was granted political asylum in Britain, and he is now the foremost fundamentalist ideologue in the West. From the belly of the beast, he has contended that the Jews everywhere are behind a worldwide campaign against Islam. Islam and the West could reach an accommodation, he says, were it not for the worldwide machinations of the Jews, who fan the fires of mistrust. Beware the Jews, he admonishes the West: "We Islamists hope that the West is not carried away by the Jewish strategy of linking the future of its relationship with the Islamic world with a war against Islam."

The recent agreement between Israel and the PLO, and Israel's continuing negotiations with Arab states, have, if anything, exacerbated fundamentalist anti-Semitism. Opposed to any negotiated agreement, the fundamentalists now seek to frighten Islamic opinion by warning that peace will subject the Muslim world to complete Jewish domination.

Since the expulsion of the Jews from the Arab world over a generation ago, domestic Jewish influence has not been a major issue, either for nationalists or fundamentalists. But now the fundamentalists are declaring that the "normalization" provisions of any peace treaty will mean a massive influx of Jews into Arab countries—as diplomats, journalists, businessmen, and tourists. Their objective, say the fundamentalists, will be to dominate and corrupt the Islamic world.

This is the line now being taken by the leading spokesman of the Palestinian Hamas, Ibrahim Ghawshah, who resides in Jordan. Ghawshah subscribes to the concept that the conflict with the Jews is not over territory but truth, and is therefore eternal: "We think the conflict between the Arabs and Jews, between the Muslims and the Jews, is a cultural conflict that will continue to rage throughout all time." With peace, he warns, the Jews will gain the upper hand in that conflict; the return of Arab territory is a clever Jewish ruse, which will allow Israel to extend its hegemony over the entire region. Israel's economic resources, he reminds Muslims,

> are extremely advanced technologically and scientifically. God forbid, if by means of signing the peace accords the Arabs and Israelis reach a compromise and they implement their plan for autonomy. Arab economies will collapse because they will not be able to compete with the Israelis' modern industries. Thus, Israel will dominate the region as Japan dominates Southeast Asia, and the Arabs will all become employees of the Jews.

The image of the Jew is thus transformed, from a ruthless enemy on the battlefield to a ruthless boss on the factory floor. In the same spirit, Ghannushi has called the Israel-PLO accord "a Jewish-American plan encompassing the entire region, which would cleanse it of all resistance and open it to Jewish economic and cultural activity, culminating in complete Jewish hegemony from Marrakesh to Kazakhstan."

This Jewish hegemony would extend even into Arabia, to the sacred precincts of Islam, from which Muhammad expelled the Jews. "The Jews are planning to return to Khaybar," warns Ghawshah, referring to the town near Medina which was the largest Jewish settlement in Arabia

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at the time of Muhammad, and against which Muhammad waged war. "Actually, by this accord, they will go there. They will go back peacefully. They will ask for the houses of their grandfathers."

From the fundamentalist vantage point, this scenario of Jews penetrating their world, demanding a return even to Arabia, is the nightmarish prelude to the ultimate eradication of Islam by its most intractable enemy.

And so fundamentalists must now proceed to the task of portraying the Jews in their true light. Hezbollah's Fadlallah takes for granted that agreements will be reached between Israel and weak Arab governments. Their implementation therefore must be combated at the popular level. And Fadlallah points to the source from which Muslims can draw inspiration:

> In the vocabulary of the Qu'ran, Islamists have much of what they need to awaken the consciousness of Muslims, relying on the literal text of the Qu'ran, because the Qu'ran speaks about the Jews in a negative way, concerning both their historical conduct and future schemes.

THIS species of anti-Semitism is intended by its creators to amplify a genuine apprehension. As more accords are reached, Jews are appearing in Arab countries either where they were never present, or where they disappeared over a millennium ago, or whence they fled a generation ago. Fear of subjugation runs deep in Arab societies, and it will not be surprising if this shrill anti-Semitism gains a widespread hearing.

But the invigorated anti-Semitism of Muslim fundamentalists is a threat not only in the Middle East. Muslim immigrants and visitors have arrived in ever greater numbers to the West, in countries where Jews are long established: Britain, France, the U.S., Argentina, and Australia. Today virtually every trend in Islamic thought and activism is represented in the Americas and Europe, including the most militant forms of extremism. Britain, for example, is home to organizations of Iran's supporters, especially around the so-called "Muslim Parliament"; to the Palestinian Hamas, which publishes its flagship magazine in London; and to the Hizb al-Tahrir, or "Liberation Party," clandestine in the Middle East but highly visible on British campuses. This is the kind of volatile mix one would be hard-pressed to find in any single Middle Eastern country.

In recent years, the Jews have not been at the top of the agenda of Muslim fundamentalists in the West, who have been much more preoccupied with two other objectives. First, they have tried to purge Muslim ranks of "deviants," to create an atmosphere of intellectual intimidation so that only their ideas can be safely aired. This was the portent of the Rushdie affair in Britain. Second, they have tried, often through violence, to compel Western governments to abandon support for secular, pro-Western regimes in the Islamic world. This was the apparent motive behind the World Trade Center bombing. Until now, the Jews have been marginal to the quest for purity and power; and until Buenos Aires, Jews as such had not been singled out for death threats or bomb attacks.

But the progress of the Arab-Israeli peace process has altered fundamentalist priorities. If the peace process cannot be stopped on Middle Eastern ground, then perhaps its momentum can be checked by a counteroffensive on foreign ground. And for those fundamentalists who have thoroughly refined their theory of a world Jewish conspiracy against Islam, a Jewish target will do as well as an Israeli one. Indeed, the message of Buenos Aires is that Jewish targets, because they are so numerous and indefensible, might even be preferred under certain circumstances.

The upshot is that all of Jewry is held hostage against the conduct of Israel. The choice probably fell first on Argentina because it has no effective investigative apparatus of its own—a weakness demonstrated by its failure to solve the Israeli embassy bombing of 1992. But a similar strike could be delivered just as readily in any other country. The infrastructure is already in place.*

FORTUNATELY, against this temptation to strike soft Jewish targets, there are also ideological and practical constraints. On one plane, the distinction between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora is vital to fundamentalists. Here is the secretary-general of Hezbollah, Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah, in an interview last year:

> I wish to send a message to all the Jews who came to Palestine. I want to tell them that their ambitions, dreams, and aggression can never provide them with the security, stability, and regional power they want. If they truly want security, peace, and stability, they must return from where they came. I believe the climate in Paris is better than in Palestine. Let them return to Paris, London, Australia, from wherever they were before.

Yet now, by threatening all of world Jewry, Islam's fundamentalists have contradicted this logic, strengthening the perception that it is the Jews of Israel who are the most secure of all.

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* The subsequent bombings in London, of the Israeli embassy (July 26) and of a building housing Jewish social services (July 27), seemed inconsistent with the known techniques of fundamentalists. The embassy car bomb was delivered by a woman driver, while the strike at the community building occurred at night, when the building was empty. Fundamentalist terror groups have not employed women before, and usually do not strike targets simply to demonstrate their capabilities. These bombings may have been the work of secular radicals, who wished to prove after Buenos Aires that the field did not belong only to fundamentalists. No one died in either attack, and there have been no arrests.

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Moreover, when Israel's Jews do "return," it is from a position of strength—in the tragic case of Buenos Aires, not only to help dig bodies out of the rubble, but also to assist the Argentine government in its investigation. An international *carte blanche* for the Mossad is a risk not all fundamentalists are prepared to run.

Such attacks also corrode the moral underpinnings of the fundamentalists themselves. *Jihad* is a moral code of warfare, regulated by provisions of Islamic law. As adherents of that law, many fundamentalists know that such attacks stretch it too far. Hence the silence among Hezbollah's clerics over the bombing, and the statement by one of them that, because the bombing killed women and children, "this act cannot be the work of those who are committed to Islam."

True, Hezbollah has abducted and bombed innocents of various nationalities many times before. But those acts have always created a measure of internal discord between hard-nosed operatives and the guardians of the law. This is something Hezbollah usually seeks to avoid, and may serve as a brake on any rapid descent into all-out terror against Jewish targets worldwide.

More practically, Muslim fundamentalists are discovering again that attacks against Jews as such yield no benefits and provide no relief from Israel's military strikes. This is a repeat lesson, since a decade ago, Hezbollah gained nothing from holding another Jewish community hostage against Israel's conduct.

Thus, in 1984 and 1985, a group operating under the wing of Hezbollah and calling itself the "Organization of the Oppressed of the Earth" abducted one in every ten of the remaining 100 Jews in Lebanon, hoping to force the release of Shiites detained by an Israel-backed militia in south Lebanon. Hezbollah accused its Jewish hostages of espionage: "We did not take these people because they are Jewish." The charge was dismissed even by Lebanese Shiites, most notably in the case of Elie Hallak, the "doctor of the poor," who had ministered largely to Shiites in the Ein-el-Mreisse quarter of West Beirut.

In 1985, Hezbollah began to murder its Jewish hostages, ultimately killing all of them, including Dr. Hallak, in retaliation for Israeli strikes in south Lebanon. But Israel did not negotiate for their release. Nor did it retaliate for their murder.

Israel's policy, then and now, remains one of no negotiation over Jewish hostages. It will not drop its own defense if enemies threaten Jews elsewhere. Nor is it obliged to retaliate when Jews elsewhere are struck. And so, although Israel extended a hand to the dazed Jewish community of Buenos Aires, it did not take any retaliatory action in Lebanon for the bombing. On the other hand, Israel still retaliates against every rocket fired in its own direction by Hezbollah, and can be expected to do so in the future.

Israel's policy has been to signal that when Hezbollah attacks Israelis, Israel will invariably respond. But when it attacks Jews elsewhere, it must reckon not with Israel, but with the world. Today, many fundamentalist movements seek political legitimacy in the eyes of the world as they pursue power at home. If attacks on Jews fail to move Israel, but do move the world against them, their calculation becomes complicated.

BUT these constraints alone will not suffice to put an end to terrorism. There is now a great backwash of extreme fundamentalists into the West, the result of crackdowns in the Middle East and North Africa. They are gaining shelter, visas, and even political asylum. While some respect the laws of their host countries, some do not. There are fundamentalists who look upon the West as one more arena for the conduct of their *jihad*—against Western governments, their own governments, Israel, and the Jews.

If they are to be stopped, Western governments will have to show an absolute determination to keep their ground free of the violence that characterizes conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa. This can best be done by preventing the entry of more fundamentalist standard bearers; by regarding those already in the West as potentially violent; and by employing every legal means of surveillance against them.

Jewish communities also must grow alert to the danger. The prescient introduction to the *Anti-Semitism World Report* for 1992, published by the Institute of Jewish Affairs in London, determined that "Jewish security throughout the world is perhaps affected most seriously of all by Islamic fundamentalist groups." Yet at the same time, the report admitted that "this is an area about which there is more speculation than hard evidence," and that there is "an insufficient knowledge of the extent of [Muslim] anti-Jewish activity and propaganda" even in Britain and France.

The explanation for this failing is the obvious tendency to focus upon the heirs to the most destructive anti-Semitism of the past: neo-Nazis and the racist Right. Hence in the aftermath of the Buenos Aires bombings, there were many Argentine Jews who assumed that only the extreme Right could have been responsible for so heinous an assault.

This is a view of anti-Semitism that looks backward, not forward. For the greatest threat today comes not from neo-Nazis but from those fundamentalists of Islam who see in every Jew a political target in their war against Israel. Much more must be done by Jews to thwart them, including in-depth research, defensive measures, close cooperation with law-enforcement agencies, and dialogue with responsible Arab and Muslim organizations. If such activity is not made a priority, Buenos Aires may turn out to be only the first strike in a global *jihad* against the Jews.

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Naked Unto Our Enemies

Angelo M. Codevilla

THE crisis over North Korea's development of a nuclear arsenal has—or should have—brought us face to face with two hard truths. First, the nonproliferation agreements we have been relying on cannot work against precisely the kind of rogue state these agreements were designed to keep from acquiring nuclear weapons. Second, because we continue to eschew missile defense—indeed, right now we have *nothing* deployed on land, sea, or in space that could shoot down even one missile fired at us—we are at the mercy of the worst elements of mankind.

To see how we got ourselves to this point, why all the old arguments against missile defense have become meaningless, and why we are finally being forced to think about nuclear weapons realistically for the first time, we must start by looking back to the dawn of the nuclear age.

NO SOONER had atom bombs been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 than both popular and elite publications began presenting nuclear power as at once the goddess and the demon of the new age—an inexhaustible source of energy for progress, but also a guarantee that the next war would bring the world to an end. If mankind changed its ways, it would prosper as never before. If not, it would perish.

Such utopian talk notwithstanding, however, many people knew that nuclear weapons were not magic, and that the destructiveness of war had always depended less on what warriors had in their hands than on what was on their minds. As for the military, it understood that the atom bomb was not in fact a doomsday machine. After all, dropping a single bomb from high altitude meant that one could not be sure it would land closer than about a half-mile from the target. Targets of concrete or steel, rather than Japan's papier-mâché cities, might escape damage entirely. And then, of course, no one could ensure that the airplane carrying the bomb would penetrate the airspace of an undefeated enemy.

But common sense was unable to prevail against the fantasies spawned by the atom bomb. Within weeks of Hiroshima, Bernard Brodie and other "defense intellectuals" put together a little book, *The Absolute Weapon*, that formulated what would soon became conventional wisdom for American policy-makers. In this view, nuclear weapons were not ordinary things in the hands of ordinary people whose invention had changed nothing in human nature or statecraft. On the contrary, the advent of this "absolute weapon" had changed everything, beginning with war itself.

In the past, defenses against attack had been essential in war. But now, since no one would absolutely guarantee that a nuclear bomb could not reach a given target, and since a single bomb could utterly destroy that target, defense had become impossible. In the past, too, the number of weapons on each side had counted enormously in war. But now, when each adversary could be destroyed by 2,000 nuclear devices, the fact that one possessed 2,000 and the other 6,000 would make no difference. Nor could regimes based on different ethical systems view atomic weapons differently, because "in no case is the fear of nuclear attack likely to be low." Hence the Soviet Union and the United States would be able to destroy each other, but neither could protect itself, and both would know it. No changes in technology would ever alter this state of affairs.

This entire conception was always nonsense from top to bottom. The truth is that while cities are easy to destroy with nuclear weapons, most military targets are difficult, and deep-underground bunkers are immune. With nuclear as with any other weapons, concentrating offensive weapons to overcome defenses in one area means that other areas will not be attacked. One belligerent may have x nuclear weapons in its arsenal, but how many of these will hurt its adversary depends on how little, how much, and how well the adversary does to preempt or defend against them. Fear of death, whether by razor at the throat, concentration camp, or nuclear war has never affected different people in the same way. Finally, anyone who says that the most recent human invention is the last is surely mistaken.

Nevertheless, the message of *The Absolute*

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Weapon proved so congenial to American policy-makers that it swept everything before it. The reason it was so attractive is that it promised to obviate the hard questions of war and peace. If any nuclear war would bring the world to an end, there would be no need to distinguish between better and worse causes, between friends and enemies, or to make sensible plans. Thus, the orthodoxy of *The Absolute Weapon* created a value-free utopia in which for all practical purposes nuclear weapons did not exist.

Cautions were voiced by critics like Herman Kahn (who showed that nuclear war could come in as many sizes and shapes as any other kind and that its destructiveness was finite), and Albert Wohlstetter (who argued that it was possible to destroy the enemy's nuclear forces before any were launched and thus limit damage to one's own country and even make retaliation unreasonable). But these critics were vilified even for "thinking about the unthinkable"—an activity of which American policy-makers in the 1950's were increasingly innocent. Even as the military was preparing to defend the country, it was beginning to believe that plans for nuclear war, and especially for defense against it, might actually bring on such a war.

Then, in 1963, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara began reshaping U.S. strategic forces according to the orthodoxy of the "absolute weapon." By this time, of course, American ballistic missiles were replacing aircraft as the main means of delivering nuclear weapons. But ours were designed to be incapable of destroying Soviet missiles in their bunkers. The magnificent system of defense against aircraft which we had developed in the early postwar years was scrapped, while anti-missile defense programs were shifted from production of usable devices to endless and fruitless research.

All this was summed up by the theory that came to be known as Mutually Assured Destruction, or MAD. According to this theory, the best way to prevent nuclear war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was for both sides to keep their cities defenseless against it, and for both sides to retain an invulnerable capability for striking back after a nuclear attack. Denied the ability to start a nuclear war without bringing about their own destruction, both sides would be deterred.

Nothing the Soviets did could shake the belief of American officialdom that Moscow shared its orthodoxy. Thus, for example, in 1972 the U.S. government, in signing the anti-ballistic-missile (ABM) treaty, pledged not to defend America against Soviet missiles in exchange for a Soviet promise to build no more than 300 bunker-killing warheads. By the 1980's, the Soviets had built over 6,000 of this kind, suggesting that, in defiance of the orthodoxy, they were trying to develop a first-strike capability. Nevertheless, we let this increase pass because we considered it meaningless.

Again, throughout the 1980's, the U.S. government's annual report on arms-control compliance accused the Soviets of violating their pledge not to build an anti-missile system. Yet according to the CIA's National Intelligence Estimates, the Soviets could not possibly believe that the devices they were building would protect them, and therefore (the CIA reasoned) their defenses were unlikely to embolden them to take actions they would not otherwise have taken.

In short, the U.S. government's resolve to leave America vulnerable to Soviet nuclear weapons did not depend on anything the Soviets did. It came from a deep desire on the part of American officials to believe that nuclear weapons were useless and unusable.

Another manifestation of the same desire was the U.S. government's effort, begun by the Eisenhower administration, to gain Soviet co-sponsorship of a treaty banning the spread of nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union's interest in such an effort was clear enough: it rightly feared that Eastern Europe's armies would, if they could, turn such weapons against Moscow, and it also knew that the countries, like Japan, which possessed the greatest capacity to build nuclear weapons were natural allies of the U.S. As for the U.S., its attitude was summed up by Secretary of State Dean Rusk: "One nuclear power is one too many."

Although the negotiations over the nonproliferation treaty (NPT) lasted a dozen years and involved UN committees of ten and then eighteen nations, there really were only two negotiators, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and only one issue: would the U.S. be willing to prevent, or at least make it very difficult for, its friends and allies who did not already possess nuclear weapons to acquire them?

The NPT, then, was of a piece with the rest of U.S. policy toward nuclear weapons: it forced no foreign enemy to give up any capability against the U.S., and brought to the U.S. no force against foreign enemies we did not already have. By signing the NPT we placed some restrictions on ourselves and our allies. In exchange, we hoped for Soviet goodwill.

A glance at the U.S. Senate debates in 1968 on the ratification of the NPT is revealing. There was virtually no discussion of what the U.S. would do if a rogue power attempted to build nuclear weapons. Nor was the question raised of whether it would make a difference if the state acquiring such weapons was aligned with us or against us. Senators asked a few pointed questions to make sure that the U.S. had given no new guarantees to friends and allies. Most of the debates, however, were about where we could expect our budding partnership with the Soviet Union to lead.

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And the question which drew the most interest may be reduced to this: now that we and the Soviets have agreed to co-manage the world's nuclear affairs, what need is there of American anti-missile defenses?

Note that the NPT did not pretend to diminish or even cap the number of nuclear weapons aimed at the U.S. Nor did it promise additional help from anyone should any new nuclear enemies arise. Even so, the Senate's sense of relief and hope were palpable, because the treaty confirmed the deep-rooted assumption that the Soviet Union shared our utopian premises about nuclear weapons and that, together, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were moving toward a non-nuclear world.

THAT assumption continued to govern U.S. policy through all the succeeding administrations, including Ronald Reagan's, but it peaked during the presidency of George Bush, whose first priority was a "new world order." This new order was nothing but the old, orthodox utopia. The two co-leaders would reduce their own nuclear arsenals to the bare minimum required for mutually-unacceptable damage, refrain from missile defense, and join to punish rogue states like Iraq.

Treating this vision as reality, the Bush administration reduced U.S. strategic-nuclear forces well beyond the requirements of arms-control treaties. It took away all nuclear warheads from Army and Air Force units stationed abroad, as well as from Navy ships at sea. It unilaterally stopped the testing of all U.S. nuclear weapons, ensuring that the entire stockpile would cease to be reliable in a few years. And it shut down the only factory in the U.S. that produced tritium, the essential ingredient of modern nuclear bombs. Since tritium decays naturally, the decision not to produce any more meant that most of our nuclear weapons would cease to be usable in about ten years. So, as far as the U.S. was concerned, nuclear weapons were well on their way to being disinvented—at least in America.

Meanwhile, however, a world disconcertingly newer than anything that American policy-makers had imagined was being born. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, even those who did not fear a new Russian empire, or a Russo-Ukrainian war, or the possibility that the Russian nuclear arsenal might pass into the bellicose hands of Vladimir Zhirinovsky were compelled to acknowledge that the new Russia would not be our partner in building a non-nuclear "new world order." Of course, there was never any reason to believe that the old Soviet Union would ever play that role either, although many Americans convinced themselves otherwise. But few had any incentive to harbor comparable illusions about the new Russia.

Meanwhile, also, nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles were spreading in spite of the nonproliferation treaty. Indeed, the treaty's procedures for UN inspection of budding nuclear programs and the utopian ideology that was at its heart made it harder for the United States to act from the standpoint of its own interests.

And so, today, in addition to Israel, which is not a signatory of the NPT, the unofficial members of the nuclear club are India, Pakistan, and North Korea. Iran will join soon. Egypt, Algeria, and Taiwan may not be far behind. Japan and South Korea can become nuclear-missile powers at will, with virtually no notice. Saddam Hussein was slowed down a bit, but since no one proposes refighting the Gulf war—the U.S. no longer has the forces to do so—Iraq's accession to the club is only a matter of time.

YET all this is less important than the underlying fact: just about any nation nowadays can have ever-more sophisticated nuclear-tipped (or chemical- or biological-tipped) missiles.

The prime technical reason is the inexorable spread of basic technology. Consider that over half the graduate students in technical fields in American universities are foreign-born, both because many American college students have lost the taste and capacity for difficult work and because countries like India and Iran send their best students here. The upshot is that we export knowledge in its most expansive and irretrievable form.

Consider also that the basic technical tools now on the open market are vastly more sophisticated than the ones used to build the missiles and warheads on which the U.S. relied during most of the cold war. Home computers in the $5,000 range—pentium-based, or Power Macintosh, or anything using the Unix system—can run software that NASA sells on the open market for manufacturing space-launched vehicles.

Anyone who wants to turn such a vehicle into a ballistic missile can also find the components of stunningly accurate guidance systems on the open market. Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite receivers cost less than $1,000 and have accuracy down to eight meters. The guts of excellent internal-guidance systems—modern gyroscopes and accelerometers—can be as small as a child's fist, or can even be put on a microchip. The most difficult part of atom-bomb engineering, simultaneous detonation, has been rendered a nonproblem by quartz timers on computer chips. The basic design of single-stage uranium or plutonium bombs has long been public knowledge.

To be sure, getting nuclear materials is more difficult. But the enormity and disorganization of the former Soviet Union's nuclear stocks, coupled with the poverty and lack of scruples of their custodians, have made the sale of such materials

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inevitable. Indeed, the illicit export of weapons-grade plutonium has already occurred. Years ago, separating bomb-grade uranium and producing plutonium involved exotic technology. Now it is merely laborious. The technology of chemical and biological weapons is even readier at hand.

Hence, any government that wants ballistic missiles tipped with weapons of mass destruction can have them—and many do. They want nuclear weapons not—*à la* Brodie's book of 1946—because they aspire to become stewards of the terrible alternative between perpetual peace and the end of the world. No, they want these weapons to threaten or to strike ancestral enemies, or to make war more efficiently, or to hold at bay their victims' potential rescuers. Indeed, many of the new or aspiring owners of nuclear weapons want them precisely *because* of their capacity to cause mass destruction.

It must be emphasized that the American orthodoxy about defense rested on the idea that nuclear weapons would be in the hands of special leaders, and that merely possessing them would make anyone into a Bernard Brodie. But if anything is clear nowadays, it is the ordinariness (at best) of the leaders who are now acquiring weapons of mass destruction. No amount of effort is enough to imagine Korea's Kim Jong Il, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, or an Iranian ayatollah at an Aspen seminar nodding sagely at a reiteration of the theses of *The Absolute Weapon.*

How are we going to live in a world in which this is the case? The U.S. government's answer is to be found in the *Report on Nonproliferation and Counterproliferation Activities and Programs* issued in May 1994 by the Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense. These activities and programs include:

- Detection and identification of proliferation activities.
- Convincing . . . states that their security interests are best served through not acquiring weapons of mass destruction. This can be accomplished through, e.g., reduction of regional tensions through dialogue and confidence-building measures, security assurances, security assistance, public diplomacy, forward presence of U.S. troops, joint military exercises, and military contacts.
- Curtailing access to technology and materials for weapons of mass destruction through export control or other tools . . . .
- Reinforcing the Nuclear Nonproliferation treaty, the Biological and Chemical Weapons conventions, a Comprehensive Test-Ban treaty, nuclear-free zones, conventional arms treaties that stabilize regional arms races, and confidence- and security-building measures.
- Punishing violators with trade sanctions, publicizing and exposing companies and countries that assist proliferators . . . .
- Agreements to destroy, inspect, convert, monitor, or even reverse their [proliferators'] capabilities.
- Bringing to bear military, political, economic, and commercial tools . . . to persuade even the most ardent proliferator that the risks . . . are not acceptable.

Thus far, the report invites the objection that these measures are precisely those we have undertaken—unsuccessfully—against North Korea and every other nuclear-missile program of which we disapprove. Why then should any of it do any good in the future? But then come the report's final recommendations:

- Being prepared to seize, disable, or destroy weapons of mass destruction in time of conflict if necessary. . . .
- Employing active and passive defenses that will mitigate the effects of these agents. . . .

Though buried in bureaucratic gobbledygook and self-contradiction, these last two programs amount to a willingness, albeit tentative, to consider actually fighting, surviving—and, dare one say?, winning—a nuclear war.

Now, our willingness to attack a power armed with nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles must depend on the capacity to prevent those missiles, once launched, from landing on us. And indeed, the report goes on to mention several of the anti-missile systems that would be available for that purpose. But it also says that the ABM treaty stands in the way of using the most effective of these systems to do the very job it stresses as essential: hitting missiles as soon as possible after they are launched.

Trying to square the circle, the report wishes "to meet a real threat without undermining a valuable agreement." But it is impossible to design a defense that would be impenetrable to just about everybody's missiles while at the same time remaining penetrable to Russia's. The U.S. government's attempt to distinguish between tactical and strategic anti-missile systems for purposes of arms control makes no technical sense. In reality, the only meaningful distinction is between devices that perform better and others that perform worse.

In any event, far from being a "valuable agreement," the ABM treaty was always harmful to us in the past—and still is. It made no more sense to be vulnerable to Brezhnev twenty years ago than it does to be vulnerable to Kim Jong Il today.

A good example of how the treaty has worked to cripple our technology is the Patriot radar and interceptor system that defended U.S. troops and Israeli cities during the Gulf war. Designed in 1974, the Patriot could have seen incoming warheads 150 miles away, and could have hit them 30 miles away. But, in deference to the ABM treaty, the Patriot radar's power was cut so that it

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could see warheads only 50 miles away. Its operating software was downgraded, the fuse on its warhead was made intentionally inaccurate, and it had to receive data on the direction of incoming warheads indirectly.

During the early 80's, some of the Patriot's potency was restored, enabling it to intercept Iraqi SCUDs, albeit too close for comfort. New programs will now upgrade the system a bit more, but without undoing its major self-imposed handicaps.

Similarly, during the 70's and 80's, the Navy built AEGIS, an air-defense system for ships. Its radar is so powerful that it can track debris in space, and its computer can handle dozens of targets almost simultaneously. The reason AEGIS did not suffer the fate of the Patriot is that the Navy hid its true capacities from the arms-control bureaucracy.

If the Navy's 27 existing AEGIS cruisers (plus 3 AEGIS destroyers and 26 more planned) were equipped with fast boosters and an accurate fuse on their standard interceptor missiles, each could protect an area within a radius of 100 miles and intercept incoming warheads some 50 miles from their targets. If one upgraded AEGIS ship were in New York harbor, the entire metropolitan area might well be unscathed even if some twenty warheads were to arrive within a few seconds. Hence, the existing AEGIS fleet could provide substantial protection for coastal America or for threatened U.S. allies. Building more AEGIS ships, as well as ground-based AEGIS units, could extend this reasonably solid protection—especially if each unit were allowed to receive data directly from space-based sensors.

But here again, the ABM treaty stands in the way, since upgrading AEGIS would violate our own interpretation of the treaty.

The Patriot and AEGIS at least exist, but the Department of Defense also has a flood of technology that it has refrained from fashioning into anti-missile weapons. There is, for example, the Theater High Altitude Air Defense System (THAAD). What will this combination of ground-based radars and interceptors do if it is ever built? That depends on ongoing arguments among technologists, arms controllers, and budgeteers. If the THAAD program were to produce the best that technology allows, it would intercept warheads beyond, as well as on the edges of, the atmosphere. But once again, this would violate the ABM treaty.

In the same way, the Pentagon has excellent technology, developed between the late 70's and mid-80's, to discriminate among warheads and decoys long before they reenter the atmosphere on the basis of how much heat they emit. The Pentagon also has excellent technology from the same period to intercept warheads in late mid-course. Both sets of programs could have produced useful devices long ago. But the U.S. government has kept them in the equivalent of limbo.

The U.S. also has powerful radars in the Arctic and wondrous satellites in orbit that, with few modifications, *would* help any anti-missile device we *might* build. So, too, with various technologies that could intercept enemy missiles when they are most vulnerable—just as they exit the atmosphere, and before they release their warheads. Well over a decade ago, we could have built space-based lasers. We now know that, in 1987, the Soviet Union launched such an anti-missile device. But a booster rocket malfunctioned and put it into the Indian Ocean rather than into orbit. (The device was crude by U.S. standards, but it produced between 10 and 15 megawatts—enough to destroy any U.S. missile.) Today the technology for such devices is even better than *circa* 1980. Yet we are no closer than we were then to building them.

WHY? Certainly not because these, and other kinds of devices too numerous to mention, would be ineffective. On the contrary, if they were ineffective, no treaty would have been necessary to ban them and exhortations against building them would be meaningless.

Scientists who argue against trying to build such devices typically do not contend that each device would not function as advertised.* Rather, they restate the orthodoxy of *The Absolute Weapon*. The following sentence by McGeorge Bundy, William Crowe, and Sidney Drell—pillars of the foreign-policy, military, and scientific-contractor establishments, respectively—is remarkable only for its clarity: "There really is no prospect that all-out defense can outrun all-out offense in nuclear warfare, because of the . . . overwhelming destructiveness of every single nuclear warhead."

Statements like this beg the central question: if every nuclear warhead is so fearsome, why not do everything possible to defend against it? Why not build every device that might reduce the proportion of weapons arriving to weapons launched? What is wrong with cutting down the damage done by any attack no matter where it comes from?

On the lowest level, the answer to the question of why we remain defenseless involves the personal stakes of a class of powerful policy-makers. Admiral Crowe's memoirs recount that when he was America's highest-ranking military man under Ronald Reagan, he did not take his commander-in-chief's promulgation of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), or his pronouncements about the necessity of anti-missile defense, to mean that the issue "had already been decided." Rather, Crowe writes, "committing the necessary funding would have seriously unbalanced the mil-

* See my articles in COMMENTARY, May 1986 and September 1987.

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itary's non-SDI programs. From my point of view, that alone was enough reason to move carefully."

In other words, to make sure that as little money as possible was diverted from their favorite constituencies, Crowe and people like him fixed it so that SDI would deliver no protection. Indeed, the panel appointed to determine what the SDI program would be was made up exclusively of representatives of organizations that would lose money if the United States ever built missile defenses.

On another level, the continuing opposition to defense is due to a deeply ingrained distrust of the American people. Spurgeon Keeny, executive director of the Arms Control Association, has recently written: "If the U.S. is not prepared to act overseas without a shield against remote contingencies [namely, our troops or our country being threatened with nuclear weapons], it should not be involved in the first place." This recalls the refrain of the anti-SDI chorus during the 1980's that, with a U.S. defensive shield, Americans could not be trusted to refrain from doing dangerously bellicose things. Although the anti-anti-Communism that animated this sort of sentiment a decade ago has diminished, it can now feed well enough on garden-variety isolationism.

On the most fundamental level, the reason for the enduring opposition to defense is that it brings us up against truths we would rather not confront: that the nuclear danger, terrible though it is, is not unlimited; that what foreign governments will or will not do is determined by factors beyond our control; that treaties with those who wish us harm are not worth the paper they are written on; and that our lot, now as ever, is constantly to tinker with imperfection.

This last point is crucial. One of the main weaknesses of Ronald Reagan's conception of SDI was the notion that it should make nuclear weapons obsolete. This was, ironically, the same utopianism that had left us defenseless in the first place, and it gave the opponents of SDI a wonderful opening. For even to think of guaranteeing that no missile will ever get through is to get bogged down in technical requirements that cannot possibly be met. It is of a piece with the mindset of people who engage in *a-priori* estimates of the effectiveness of imaginary anti-missile systems. Will "they" be 70-percent effective? 90-percent?

Such thinking is inherently foolish because no one can foretell precisely who would attack what, under what circumstances, with how many missiles, of what characteristics, how well they would perform, what quality and quantity of defenses they would face, and how well both their technical components and human leaders would perform. Thus, while we may legitimately expect that some missile defenses will fail miserably, we can also expect that others will protect 100 percent, with plenty left over to spare.

To the extent that we continue to dream of stuffing the nuclear genie back into the bottle through ill-conceived arms-control pacts like the ABM and NPT treaties, our defenses will be littler and later than they might have been. But if North Korea's lack of subtlety should succeed in forcing the U.S. government to face the awful ordinariness of nuclear weapons, and the irrationality of deliberately keeping ourselves defenseless against them, we will owe its gruesome dictators a debt of thanks.

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How Good Was Leonard Bernstein?

Terry Teachout

YOUNGER readers accustomed to hearing the name of the late Leonard Bernstein uttered only in reverential tones may find it hard to believe that America's best-known classical musician was for a long time treated as something perilously close to a figure of fun. Harold Schonberg, chief music critic of the *New York Times* throughout Bernstein's decade-long tenure (1959-69) as music director of the New York Philharmonic, regularly portrayed him as a flamboyant poseur: "Toward the end of the Liszt concerto, he rose vertically into the air, *à la* Nijinsky, and hovered there a good fifteen seconds by the clock." Virgil Thomson, perhaps the most influential American music critic of the 20th century, was even more dismissive of Bernstein as a composer: "Bernstein . . . does not compose with either originality or much skill. His pieces lack contrapuntal coherence, melodic distinction, contrapuntal progress, harmonic logic, and concentration of thought." And Tom Wolfe's 1970 essay, "Radical Chic: That Party at Lenny's," in which Bernstein was mercilessly caricatured as the ultimate limousine liberal, exploded whatever claims he still had to being taken seriously as an intellectual.

But the rise and fall of reputations is a futures market, and Leonard Bernstein is looking more and more like a blue-chip stock. More than 50 years after his debut as a conductor, and almost four years after his death at the age of seventy-two, he remains the only American-born performer to have found a secure place in the first tier of such classical-music superstars as Toscanini, Horowitz, and Callas. Sales of his recordings reportedly doubled between 1990 and 1993, and though his concert works have yet to win widespread popularity, two of his musical comedies, *West Side Story* and *Candide*, and one of his ballet scores, *Fancy Free*, are performed regularly around the world.

Nevertheless, many of the old doubts about Bernstein persist. Norman Podhoretz once said of Saul Bellow that "there was a sense in which the validity of a whole phase of American experience was felt to hang on the question of whether or not he would turn out to be a great novelist." The musicians of my generation—born after World War II—felt that way about Leonard Bernstein. To us, he *was* American music, and we wanted him to be great. It was as if his success would somehow ratify our own strivings, and prove that we, too, could do great things.

I suspect that Bernstein was aware of the extent to which so many people had an emotional stake in his career, and that he found it intimidating. It was a cliché, even a joke, that he could never decide what to do with himself: compose, conduct, play the piano, write Broadway shows, do TV. But what Bernstein really wanted was to be a great composer. "I never had a career," he said in 1984. "Conducting is really just a thing." It was a theme to which he returned days before his death in 1990: "The obvious fear is that I'll be remembered—however vaguely—not as a composer but as a conductor."

Thus far, that fear is being realized. But the story of Leonard Bernstein's impact is far from over. Indeed, those of us who grew up with "Lenny on our minds" (in Samuel Lipman's perfect phrase) are still left with the need to decide, at least tentatively, just how good he really was.

IN MAKING that effort, we have the help of two recent biographies. *Leonard Bernstein*, by far the longer of the two, is by Humphrey Burton,* a British producer who directed the many televised concerts and documentaries Bernstein made during the last twenty years of his life. Though the book was written with the cooperation of Bernstein's family and with exclusive access to his huge personal archive, it is not, Burton says, "an 'authorized' biography. Nobody has told me what to say or prevented me from saying what I wanted." Be that as it may, Burton's biography has the tone of a brief for the defense, albeit one written by a lawyer with mixed feelings about his client; it is also, less obviously, a book by an Englishman about an American, and suffers at times from an inadequate feel for various aspects, some of them significant, of American culture. Rich but unselective in detail, *Leonard*

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Bernstein contrives to be at once slightly pedestrian and thoroughly engrossing.

Meryle Secrest's *Leonard Bernstein: A Life** is both considerably shorter and very different in tone, mainly because the author, a professional biographer whose earlier subjects include Frank Lloyd Wright and Bernard Berenson, was not allowed to make use of the Bernstein archives and because Bernstein's family discouraged his closest friends from talking to her. (An exception was Shirley Bernstein, Leonard's sister, who spoke candidly to Secrest about his younger years.) As a result, Secrest was forced to rely more extensively on secondary sources than Burton, and her book, while mostly admiring, tends to take a drier, more jaundiced view of Bernstein the man.

Neither Burton nor Secrest has much of interest to say about Bernstein's compositions, or his place in the history of American music. (Joan Peyser's much-criticized 1987 biography, for all its blatant errors and reliance on unsourced scandalous gossip, gives a better idea of how Bernstein stood in relation to the musical crosscurrents of his time.) For this reason alone, neither of these books can be considered definitive.

Taken as preliminary reports, however, and especially when read side by side, they are very useful, partly because they tend to correct each other: Burton's intimacy is balanced by Secrest's skepticism. Though there remain a few gaping holes—we still await, for example, an account of Bernstein's long relationship with the choreographer Jerome Robbins, who was responsible for the original conceptions of both *Fancy Free* and *West Side Story*—it is now possible for those wishing to take stock of his work to do so based on a detailed knowledge of his life.

THE temptation to concentrate on Bernstein the man at the expense of Bernstein the musician is easy to understand. From the beginning, Leonard Bernstein had an uncanny knack for self-dramatization. Even his angst felt stagey. ("I remember saying to him," the composer Lukas Foss told Burton, "that he had such an expansive luxurious way of being miserable that it didn't seem miserable to me, ever.") In addition, he exuded at all times the tangy odor of scandal. Though stories about Bernstein's private life were sanitized by friendly journalists well into the 70's, tales of his elephantine ego, heavy drinking, and increasingly flagrant homosexuality were long the common coin of conversation wherever musicians gathered.

Perhaps one should call it bisexuality, since Bernstein married and had three children. But going strictly by the weight of documentary evidence, it would appear that Bernstein was mainly attracted to men. (A close woman friend believed that "he required men sexually and women emotionally.") And despite the oft-expressed wishes of some of his friends, his sex life cannot simply be dismissed as a purely private matter. For one thing, traces of Bernstein's sexual interests can be found in many of his compositions, among them the Serenade after Plato's *Symposium* and, less predictably, *West Side Story*, a parable of forbidden love as unabashedly homosexual in its subtext as any Tennessee Williams play. Even more to the point, Bernstein was part of the informal network of gay artists which played a key institutional role in American classical music and dance during the 30's and 40's.

Though the doings of this group have yet to be chronicled in any detail by historians of American music, its existence has always been common knowledge, and one of its great successes was to help boost the career of the young Leonard Bernstein. It is, to put it mildly, no coincidence that three of Bernstein's earliest patrons—the conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos and the composers Aaron Copland and Marc Blitzstein—were homosexual. Bernstein appears to have been sexually involved with all three men; Secrest even speculates that he "made the decision to abandon his heterosexual pursuits for the good of his career." But one need not go that far to recognize that the young Bernstein's homosexuality gave him entrée to artistic circles not normally open to a Harvard undergraduate.

Of special interest is Bernstein's relationship with Copland, which has never before been discussed honestly in print, least of all in Copland's own poker-faced memoirs. Copland was for all intents and purposes Bernstein's composition teacher; Bernstein returned the favor by championing, as a conductor, his mentor's music. Indeed, the eventual recognition of Copland as the outstanding American composer of the 20th century owed much to Bernstein's advocacy.

But the relationship, it turns out, went deeper than that. Burton's book contains hitherto unpublished excerpts from the Copland-Bernstein correspondence which show not only that the two men were lovers at one point (probably in 1940), but that Copland also went to great lengths to encourage Bernstein to become a conductor:

> I keep being properly impressed by all the offers, interests, contacts, personalities that flit through your life. But don't forget *our* party line—you're heading for conducting in a big way—and everybody and everything that doesn't lead there is an excrescence on the body politic.

The irony is that homosexuality proved to be an agonizing dilemma for Leonard Bernstein, both because it left him wracked with seizures of guilt (as a young man, he spoke of having "a canker in my soul") and because it forced him to lead a life of hypocrisy in order to achieve his main professional goal, the musical directorship of a major American orchestra. Not until 1959

* Knopf, 496 pp., $30.00.

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did Bernstein take charge of the New York Philharmonic, eight years after he married the Chilean actress Felicia Montealegre. Had he wished merely to be a composer, Bernstein's sexuality would not have stood in the way, any more than it did for Copland, Thomson, or Samuel Barber. It was his additional desire to be a public figure—a community leader, as it were—that made it impossible for Bernstein to be openly gay.

Being Jewish seemed to present another obstacle to winning the leadership of a major orchestra. Certainly Serge Koussevitzky, music director of the Boston Symphony and Bernstein's most important mentor as a conductor, thought it did. Koussevitzky, who himself had converted from Judaism to Christianity as a young man, knew well that the upper-class boards of trustees of America's leading orchestras were reluctant to hire Jewish conductors. He therefore advised his young protégé to change his name to "Leonard S. Burns." But Bernstein refused. Burning though he was with ambition, he seems never at any time to have considered concealing his Jewishness to further that ambition. On the contrary: unlike Koussevitzky, Bernstein probably sensed that Jewishness was becoming more of an advantage than a liability in postwar America.

In any case, having grown up in Boston, the son of mildly observant immigrant parents, Bernstein, both in his life and his work, always made a great point of his Jewishness (and was always passionately devoted to Israel). Burton even claims that Bernstein created "the most significant body of specifically Jewish work achieved by a Jewish composer working in the field of classical music." This may be excessive, but Burton's description of Bernstein's relation to Jewishness is fair enough:

> [O]ne is struck by how deeply the interior life of this worldly man was influenced by his Jewish inheritance, by the Hebrew texts he learned as a child (at his father's behest), and by the synagogue music he heard sung in Temple Mishkan Tefila every Friday evening. His first major composition, the *Jeremiah* Symphony, was a setting of beautiful Hebrew words about desolation and despair, taken from the Book of Lamentations. His big choral works, the *Kaddish* Symphony (a Jewish requiem in all but name), the *Chichester Psalms*, and *Mass*, all include settings of Hebrew or Aramaic religious texts, while the *Dybbuk* ballet score is the most obvious demonstration of his concern for the mystic aspect of his Jewish blood and faith.

BURTON is less accurate in describing Bernstein's politics. Like Secrest, he tends to take Bernstein's simple-minded leftism at face value, seeing it as an expression of idealism and humanism. A more discerning judgment comes from Hilton Kramer, writing last summer in the *New York Post* after it was revealed that the FBI had kept tabs on Bernstein:

> There can hardly have been a single committee, publication, open letter, or organization promoting the interests of the Soviet Union, the Communist party, and their fellow-travelers during the years of Bernstein's ascent to international stardom to which the conductor-composer did not contribute his name and money.
>
> About all such causes, he proved to be a perfect fool, apparently believing to the end—and against mountains of evidence to the contrary—that they were "good" causes.

Moreover, both Burton and Secrest fail to convey the extent to which Bernstein became one of the emblematic figures of American culture. In Bernstein, the left-wing populism of the 30's and the politics of liberation of the 60's joined hands, driving him to embrace not only every front organization in sight but almost every other lunatic political tendency of his time. Whether or not this mattered in the larger scheme of things, it mattered greatly for him. For the fact is that in Bernstein's politics lay the seeds of his ultimate destruction: seeking liberation, he found chaos instead.

A monster of self-indulgence, Bernstein nonetheless managed to keep his appetites under control during the 60's, mainly because the New York Philharmonic would have fired him had he become an object of scandal. In 1969, he retired from the Philharmonic and became an itinerant conductor beholden to no one; eight months later, he and his wife Felicia threw the fund-raising party for the Black Panthers immortalized in "Radical Chic." In the course of the following decade, he temporarily deserted Felicia for a young man, proclaimed his homosexuality to the world (thereby astonishing his children, to whom he had earlier denied it), surrounded himself with an entourage of handsome sycophants, wrecked his health with drugs and drink, composed a smallish portfolio of appallingly pretentious music, and became a public embarrassment whenever he opened his mouth. There can seldom have been a midlife crisis quite like it.

The death of Felicia Bernstein in 1978 accelerated her husband's disintegration. He continued to brag to awestruck reporters about his invulnerability:

> I was diagnosed as having emphysema in my mid-twenties, and I've been smoking for decades. I was told that if I didn't stop, I'd be dead by age twenty-five. Then they said I'd be dead by age forty-five. And fifty-five. Well, I beat the rap. I smoke, I drink, I stay up all night and screw around. I'm overcommitted on all fronts.

But his children knew better. His daughter Jamie (who once discovered to her horror that her father had encouraged her to have an affair with a man with whom he himself had previously had sexual relations) told Burton, "After my mother

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was gone, there was no one to check him except us and there were limits for us because we didn't live with him. So after that it was just Maestro City all the way."

Even the sympathetic Burton lets slip a certain amount of tight-lipped distaste at the pitiful carousing of Bernstein's final years, and Secrest and Joan Peyser, lacking the inhibitions of friendship, are a good deal more frank. But none of Leonard Bernstein's biographers sums up his last years as unsparingly as did his wife. In 1976, Bernstein informed Felicia, who had had a mastectomy two years before and was (though she did not yet know it) dying of cancer, that he was leaving her for a male lover. "You're going to die a bitter and lonely old man," she told him. And so he did.

THROUGHOUT Leonard Bernstein's career, many critics tended automatically to assume that, for all his great gifts, there was necessarily something slick and second-rate about his use of them. This assumption was a function of his celebrity. Some, to be sure, were blinded by Bernstein's relentless charm. Others, knowing what they knew about the man, found it difficult to take the artist seriously.

But Bernstein's fellow musicians saw through his grotesque antics. They recognized, among other things, the truth of a remark he made to the BBC's Huw Wheldon in 1959: "I'm extremely humble about whatever gifts I may have, but I am not modest about the work I do. I work extremely hard and all the time." While he may not have been above going to bed with men who could help push him up the ladder of success, he also studied with some of the toughest teachers in America—for example, piano with Isabelle Vengerova, whose other American pupils included Gary Graffman and Jacob Lateiner, and conducting with Fritz Reiner, one of the supreme baton technicians of the century. They were all impressed by his talent and application, and predicted great things for him.

He also succeeded in impressing the New York Philharmonic, the hardest-boiled gang of conductor-haters in the world, to which some witty musician long ago gave the nickname "Murder, Inc." In 1943, the twenty-five-year-old Bernstein, then assistant conductor of the Philharmonic, was called on at the last minute to substitute for the great Bruno Walter at a Sunday broadcast matinee. Not only had Bernstein not rehearsed the program, he had never before led the orchestra in public. What happened when he mounted the podium and gave the downbeat for Schumann's *Manfred* Overture, as described to Secrest by a violist who had recently joined the Philharmonic, could never have been brought off by a mere glamor boy:

> The idea was, he'd follow us, only it didn't work out that way. . . . Here were players in their fifties and sixties with long experience. And here this little snot-nose comes in and creates a more exciting performance. We were supposed to have gone over it with Bruno Walter, we had rehearsed it with him and performed it with him, and this had nothing to do with Bruno Walter. The orchestra stood up and cheered. We were open-mouthed. That man was the most extraordinary musician I have met in my life.

It is worth remembering, too, that Bernstein distinguished himself as conductor, composer, pianist, *and* teacher, a four-fold achievement virtually unprecedented in the history of music. True, he hardly devoted himself with equal fervor to all these pursuits. Once past his student days, for instance, Bernstein never again played a solo piano recital, preferring occasional appearances with the Philharmonic and other orchestras as pianist-conductor. But the few recordings he made at the keyboard are all superbly vital and imaginative, suggesting that he could have had a major career as a soloist had he wanted it.*

Bernstein's teaching, too, was basically a sideline, though it brought him well-deserved fame. The 53 Young People's Concerts he televised with the Philharmonic between 1958 and 1972 remain a singular achievement in the field of music appreciation. Especially when compared to the tinselly way in which classical music is hawked on public television today, these commercial broadcasts (which are now available on videocassette from Sony) come across as admirably straightforward both in substance and style. As always, he made ample use of his charm, but never let it get in the way of the music.

THIS was not necessarily the case when Bernstein conducted for adults. "Routine, with its loveless mediocrity, lies like hoar-frost on the surface of the world's greatest masterpieces," the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler once said. Musicians who worked with Bernstein are unanimous in praising his ability to lift everyday music-making out of the swamp of routine, to turn each concert into a once-in-a-lifetime occasion. The trouble was that the occasions in question were all too often celebrations of the man on the podium rather than the masterpieces on the program. At his worst, Bernstein was the Barbra Streisand of conductors, an ego-filled blimp who used the classics as a backdrop for his dramatic posturing.

Given his monumental vanity, however, the remarkable thing was not that Bernstein sometimes conducted badly, but that he managed so often to conduct brilliantly. Once again, the recordings tell the story better than any biography. The problem is in sorting them out. Bernstein made literally hundreds of records in the course

* Bernstein's definitive 1947 recording of the Copland Piano Sonata is currently available on CD as RCA Victor 09026-60915-2.

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of his 50 years as a conductor, most of them for Columbia and DGG.* He recorded everything from Handel's *Messiah* to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* to Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* (three times). It is risky to generalize about so large and varied a body of work, but Bernstein tended to be at his best in his Philharmonic days, particularly in the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, where his performances were brisk, volatile, essentially serious in temperament yet dramatic to an appropriate degree.

The 19th-century Romantics, on the other hand, inspired in Bernstein interpretations that could be wildly undisciplined, most of all in his old age, when he developed a taste for ultra-slow tempos. But in the 20th-century repertoire (and Bernstein, following Koussevitzky's lead, programmed more modern music, much of it by American composers, than any other conductor of his generation), he was consistently satisfying. Even when he gave his ego full throttle—something that happened not infrequently in his later recordings of Mahler, who in his earlier days he had done more than anyone else to revive and popularize—the performances that resulted were often as exciting as they were overwrought.

BERNSTEIN'S work as a composer was another matter. After *West Side Story* (1957), he made a deliberate decision to concentrate on conducting rather than composing. It was a choice with which, according to Burton, he was never fully at ease:

> To the walling up of a fruitful stream, to the dominance of the extrovert side of his personality over introspection, can perhaps be attributed the increasing number of black depressions experienced by Bernstein from his forties onward, and the occasional impression that he was not completely in touch with reality.

Bernstein's despair must have been deepened by the knowledge that the quality as well as the quantity of his compositional output fell off sharply after *West Side Story*. "Lenny had a bad case of important-itis," his fellow composer Stephen Sondheim told Meryle Secrest. It was a canny diagnosis. From 1960 on, much of Bernstein's creative energy was poured into repeated attempts to write the Great American Opera. He tried out and discarded one ambitious libretto idea after another: Nabokov's *Lolita*, Brecht's *The Exception and the Rule*, Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*. But trying to produce a masterpiece through sheer force of will can leave a composer impotent. Only four of Bernstein's post-*West Side Story* theatrical projects—*Mass* (1971), the ballet *Dybbuk* (1974), the musical comedy *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* (1976), and the opera *A Quiet Place* (1983)—made it to the stage, and all were failures, both aesthetic and commercial.

Harold Schonberg, who had a talent for getting under Bernstein's skin, once said that he could have been the American Offenbach. This must have enraged a man whose greatest desire in later life was to write an opera about the Holocaust. "You know what's made me really distraught?" a drunken Bernstein asked at a party in Rome seven years before his death. "I am only going to be remembered as the man who wrote *West Side Story*." Judging by this remark, it would seem that Bernstein had come to share the view of those critics who dismissed his earlier music as trivial. They were wrong, and so was he. Although Bernstein never succeeded in becoming a great composer, he did manage to write a number of pieces that seem likely to endure.†

To Bernstein, as to George Gershwin before him, the distinction between "popular" and "serious" was one of complexity rather than style; also like Gershwin, he was a natural melodist, making it possible for him to shuttle between Broadway and Carnegie Hall with ease. As a young man, he took plenty of heat from snobbish critics (and from Koussevitzky, who loathed what he insisted on calling "jezz") over his ventures into musical comedy. But Aaron Copland, a composer-critic scarcely less shrewd than Virgil Thomson, declined to see them as a mistake. Writing in 1948, he went so far as to single out Bernstein as one of "the best we have to offer among the new generation" of American composers:

> The most striking feature of Bernstein's music is its immediacy of emotional appeal. Melodically and harmonically it has a spontaneity and warmth that speak directly to an audience. . . . At its worst, Bernstein's music is conductor's music—eclectic in style and facile in inspiration. But at its best, it is music of vibrant rhythmic invention, of irresistible élan, often carrying with it a terrific dramatic punch. It is possible that some form of stage music will prove to be Bernstein's finest achievement.

This appraisal, made just five years after Bernstein's first major premiere, was right in every particular. He was, indeed, at his best writing for the theater—though not, I think, in *West Side*

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* My own favorite Bernstein recordings, all now available on CD, are his 1959 performance with the New York Philharmonic of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony (Sony SMK 47615); his 1966 performance with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, James King, and the Vienna Philharmonic of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (London 417 783-2LH); and a 1985 live performance with the New York Philharmonic of Copland's Third Symphony (DGG 419 170-2GH).

† Of Bernstein's recordings of his own music, I particularly like Sony SMK 47530, which contains performances with the New York Philharmonic of *Fancy Free*, the *On the Waterfront* suite, and the dance episodes from *On the Town*; DGG 415 964-2GH, which contains performances with the Israel Philharmonic of the *Jeremiah* and *Age of Anxiety* symphonies; and the complete performance of *Candide* on DGG 429 734-2GH2.

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Story, a work whose manipulativeness is more apparent now that its music and libretto must stand on their own, divorced from the electric context of Jerome Robbins's staging. But *Fancy Free* (1944) is at least as good as any of Copland's own ballet scores, and *On the Town* (1944), *Wonderful Town* (1953), and *Candide* (1956) have long since established themselves as classics of American musical comedy. As for the concert works, the *Jeremiah* Symphony (1942), the *Age of Anxiety* Symphony (1949), the Serenade after Plato's *Symposium* (1954), and *Chichester Psalms* (1965), all but the last written before Bernstein succumbed to "important-itis," combine open-hearted romanticism and polished craftsmanship to compelling effect.

This is by no means a universally accepted judgment. There are critics who still wince at the sound of Bernstein's name, not least because of his once-unfashionable commitment to tonality:

> All [musical] forms we have ever known—plainchant, motet, fugue, or sonata—have always been conceived in *tonality*, that is, in the sense of a tonal magnetic center, with subsidiary tonal relationships. . . . And the moment a composer tries to "abstract" musical tones by denying them their tonal implications, he has left the world of communication.

In the 60's and 70's, such views were the musical equivalent of preferring Adam Smith to Karl Marx. But now that the pendulum of taste has swung back from the hermetic austerity of serialism toward the directness and simplicity of tonality, Bernstein's music may be about to come into its own.

WHAT, then, does it all add up to? How good was Leonard Bernstein? And how will posterity remember him?

It goes without saying that, in the end, he did not fulfill the extravagant expectations of his admirers; nor did those of us who looked to him for validation finally get what we were looking for. And yet anyone capable of composing *Fancy Free*, reviving the music of Mahler, and introducing millions of Americans to the joys of classical music deserves to be praised for what he did, not criticized for what he failed to do.

This does not mean that we should—or can—whitewash him. In this respect, Bernstein reminds me of Richard Wagner, a composer to whose music he was increasingly drawn in his later years. "Some of us grow up more successfully than others," Bernstein said in 1985. "I have the feeling that Wagner never grew up in this sense, that he retained all his life that infantile feeling of being the center of the universe." Every person I have ever met who knew Leonard Bernstein at all well similarly describes him as a child who never grew up. As long as Wagner is remembered, it will be as a man in whom genius and beastliness were inseparably commingled; as long as Bernstein is remembered, it will be as an artist whose every achievement bore the scars of a deeply flawed character. It remains to be seen whether Bernstein will be remembered as long as Wagner has been. But my guess is that he will not soon be forgotten.

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The Secret of Jewish Continuity

Jonathan D. Sarna

"It's continuity, stupid."

So reads a sign prominently displayed in the office of a Jewish community agency in a major American city. Jewish continuity, indeed, is the current rallying cry in all circles of American Jewry. According to the *Long Island Jewish World*, "Virtually every organization and academic program on the communal map has announced new studies or programs involving their particular search for the alchemy of continuity."

And so it has been. During the past year, continuity has dominated the program of the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, the largest annual gathering of Jewish communal leaders in North America, and was a national priority of the American Jewish Committee. Each of the major rabbinical organizations discussed it, and a special issue of *Hadassah* magazine was devoted to it. An official of JESNA, a national organization that services the field of Jewish education, described the "continuity agenda" as "the most complex and far-reaching that the North American Jewish community has ever taken on."

The issue of continuity burst upon the American Jewish community in the wake of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS). This statistical study, based on interviews with 2,441 "qualified respondents," portrayed the American Jewish condition in terms calculated to shock. "In recent years," the survey revealed,

> just over half of born Jews who married, at any age, whether for the first time or not, chose a spouse who was born a Gentile and has remained so, while less than 5 percent of these marriages include a non-Jewish partner who became a Jew by choice.

As for the children of mixed couples, the survey found that only 28 percent, or slightly better than one in four, were being raised as Jews.

Although some scholars consider the NJPS findings methodologically flawed and its conclusions overstated, the study itself has taken on a life of its own in the years since its release. In the world of American Jewish symbols, NJPS now stands for the challenge posed by assimilation and rampant intermarriage. Thanks to its clarion call, the eyes of American Jews have been opened. Where for three decades the attention of the community had been focused on the dangers faced by Jews in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and on the question of whether "they" would survive, today attention is being paid to the dangers Jews face within their own communities, and the wonder is whether "we" will survive.

All this is a far cry from the mood just under a decade ago, when Charles Silberman's best-seller, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today*, reassured Jews that fears of intermarriage were greatly exaggerated. Insisting that the true intermarriage rate was 24-28 percent, Silberman forecast that it would probably stabilize at that level, and might even "decline somewhat over the next decade or two." He also claimed that "a significant minority of born-Gentile spouses—approximately 20 percent—convert to Judaism," and with respect to the children of mixed marriages he asserted that, since many were allegedly being raised Jewish, "intermarriage would lead not to a reduction in the number of Jews but to a gain."

The optimism generated by these glad tidings has since fully dissipated. Silberman himself has grown more pessimistic in the face of recent findings, and so, as we have seen, have the majority of community leaders. Revealingly, three new scholarly surveys of recent developments on the American Jewish scene reinforce their pessimism. Edward S. Shapiro in *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II* entitles his final chapter "The Question of Survival," and to that question—whether American Jews will continue to flourish amid the freedom and prosperity of America—he answers, warily, "perhaps." Howard M. Sachar closes his mammoth *A History of the Jews in America* with an intimation that the future rests far more securely with Israel. And Arthur Hertzberg, in *The Jews in America*, is the most pessimistic of all; barring a spiritual revival, Hertzberg warns, "American Jewish history will soon end, and become a part of American memory as a whole."

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Of course, prophecies of gloom and doom have been ever with us, and the record of the past suggests that it is wise to treat them with a certain degree of skepticism. Previous predictions of American Jewish decline and demise have proved utterly wrong—just as wrong as their opposites, the glowing prophecies of a new "Zion in America" dispensed by uncritical optimists.

In 1818, for example, one of the wisest men in America, Attorney General William Wirt, forecast that in the absence of persecution, American Jews at the end of a century-and-a-half would have lost their identity and ceased to exist as a separate people. Today it is William Wirt who has lost his identity and is long forgotten. In 1872, one W. M. Rosenblatt, writing in the *Galaxy*, a well-respected American journal, stated that "within 50 years" Jews would abandon circumcision and commence intermarrying. "The grandchildren, at the latest," he foresaw, "will be undistinguishable from the mass of humanity which surrounds them." Again, it is Rosenblatt who is today "undistinguishable." Most famously of all, *Look* magazine dedicated a widely-discussed cover story in 1964 to "The Vanishing American Jew." Today, *Look* itself has vanished—not just once but twice—while the Jewish people lives on.

Does this mean that today's prophets are equally misguided, and can therefore be ignored? Not exactly. Certainly the issues pointed to by those who raise the banner of Jewish continuity are real enough, and need to be addressed. And prophets of doom, even when their fears prove exaggerated, serve a vital function, alerting a community to danger and thus provoking it to mobilize its energies. By predicting that Jews will not survive, the prophets of doom may help ensure that they do.

But what exactly *are* the dangers facing the Jewish community? And is "continuity" the right medicine for them?

Ironically, in worrying about intermarriage, loss of Jewish identity, and related demographic challenges, American Jewish leaders may well be underestimating what they are up against. For it is not only Jewish life in the United States that is being buffeted by change, but the larger American social environment as well. Four great developments are particularly significant for their impact on American Jewish "continuity."

Transformation #1: Ethnicity. From their earliest days on earth, Jews have been considered and have considered themselves a separate people, different from their neighbors. "There is a people that dwells apart, not reckoned among the nations," Balaam sang out back in the wilderness, and so Jews remained for millennia. In America today, however, the claim that Jews are a separate people, a minority dwelling apart, seems increasingly dubious.

This is due not just to the geographic dispersion of Jews, or to assimilation—although it is well known that Jews have spread out, and have assimilated. More significant still is the fact that peoplehood itself—ethnicity—is no longer a recognized or meaningful category in the United States. Where only a few years ago the central differences among Americans were said to be rooted in their ethnic particularities—Italian, Irish, Polish, Jewish—today the emphasis everywhere is increasingly upon race: white, black, Hispanic, Asian American, Native American. The United States Census and the Department of Labor classify Americans for the most part by race rather than ethnicity, and programs of multiculturalism in schools and universities also place primary emphasis on race (as well as sex).

As one consequence of this shift, the lines dividing European white ethnic groups from one another in America have blurred. What we are witnessing, according to the sociologist Richard Alba, is the "erosion of ethnic differentiation." Increasingly, white ethnics in the United States are distinguished from one another by only a few outward symbols and rituals. "A new ethnic group is forming," Alba writes, "one based on ancestry from *anywhere* on the European continent," and this "ethnic group" is simply the white counterpart to the African American.

Viewed through the prism of color, Jewish Americans are no different from Irish or Italian Americans: they are just so many white males and females. Thus, when Stephen G. Breyer, a Jew, was nominated by President Clinton to serve on the Supreme Court, most observers did not regard his selection as a bid for ethnic diversity but as a "safe choice": Breyer was a white male, not a member of a minority group.

For Jews, nonrecognition of Jewish ethnic separateness poses a dramatic challenge, unprecedented in Diaspora history. How *does* one maintain Jewish distinctiveness in a society that scarcely considers Jews, as a people, distinctive at all? If ethnic differences between Jews and their white neighbors are primarily symbolic, and are anyway fast disappearing, can American Jews stave off invisibility?

Transformation #2: Religion. The world of American religion is also undergoing vast change. The model that most Americans grew up with, the famous triad celebrated in a 1955 book by Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, is on the decline. By some estimates, as many as 20 percent of all Americans now consider themselves neither Protestant nor Catholic nor Jewish: this marks a fourfold increase since 1967.

More and more of these outsiders adhere to Islam, reputedly the nation's fastest-growing faith. In 1991, the researcher Carol Stone estimated the

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number of American Muslims at over four million; while the exact figure is a matter of dispute, in all likelihood there will be more Muslims than Jews in the United States in the 21st century.

But we do not have to wait that long to see some of the effects of these shifts. Even now, Jews are experiencing a decline in their *status* in the world of American religion. The days when Jews could pretend that they comprised, as it were, a third of religious America are over. From the nation's "third faith" they have, increasingly, been relegated to the position of one of many "minority faiths."

A revealing indicator of these trends can be seen in J. Gordon Melton's widely praised *Encyclopedia of American Religions*. The 1989 edition of this work divides the country's 1,588 primary religious bodies into nineteen "families," only ten of which follow Christian beliefs and practices. Remarkably, Judaism does not even rate a religious family of its own; instead, it is grouped along with Islam, Sufism, Zoroastrianism, and Baha'i as part of the "Middle Eastern Family."

Here, then, is another problem for those concerned about Jewish continuity. How should Jews maintain their status in this new world of American religion? How can they ensure that Judaism is not lost amid the welter of contemporary religious options?

Transformation #3: Marital Patterns. Well into the 1960's, interethnic and interreligious marriages of any kind were comparatively rare in the United States; endogamy—in-marriage—was the rule. Now, among white European ethnic groups, intermarriage has become the norm rather than the exception. Swedes, Norwegians, Germans, Italians, Irish, Poles—individuals in each of these nationalities, according to the 1980 census, marry individuals of different ancestry more often than they marry within their own group.

Interreligious marriages are almost as common. About half of young Catholics now intermarry, many without the conversion of their spouses; 69 percent of young Methodists marry non-Methodists; 70 percent of young Lutherans marry non-Lutherans; and 75 percent of young Presbyterians marry non-Presbyterians. All studies indicate that intermarriage today is the American way: bonds of love take precedence over bonds of faith, bonds of ethnicity, and occasionally even bonds of color.*

Does this cause any consternation among the leaders of the communities concerned? Apparently not. According to a 1987 study by Yisrael Ellman:

> Apart from Jews, no ethnic group or institution carries out any sort of educational work designed to limit ethnic out-marriage. They accept it as a foregone conclusion. The subject is not even mentioned in the ethnic press or publications. Parents, even if actively involved in the affairs of their ethnic group, rarely show great remorse when their children marry members of other ethnic groups. Religious groups have also, to a very large extent, made peace with religiously-based intermarriage.

As for the Jews, once upon a time their views were congruent with those of other Americans: that is, strongly supportive of endogamy. Today, Jewish behavior again tends increasingly to the American norm, while Jewish leaders are virtually alone in continuing to call for in-group marriage.

The question, from the point of view of continuity, is how Jewish leaders can justify setting themselves apart from the American cultural mainstream on this issue. Or, to put it another way, how are they to succeed in their opposition to intermarriage when those among whom they live look upon it as perfectly normative behavior?

Transformation #4: Identity Patterns. Once upon a time, most people in this country adhered to the faith and ethnicity of their parents; their cultural identity was determined largely by their *descent*. Now, religious and ethnic loyalties are more commonly matters of choice; identity, to a considerable degree, is based upon *consent*.

According to George Gallup, about one American adult in four has changed faiths or denominations at least once. About one American adult in three, a study by Mary Waters discovered, has changed *ethnic* identity at least once. Individuals of mixed ancestry who have been in the United States for several generations are particularly prone to such identity transformations.

This shift from descent to consent has enormous implications for Jewish continuity. To list just a handful: Jews who accept the notion of descent think of their Jewishness as something irrevocable, as much a part of them as their blood type; Jewishness by consent, by contrast, is something completely revocable, purely a matter of choice. Jewishness by descent suggests a genealogical metaphor: Jews are related to one another through ties of blood. Jewishness by consent implies a marital metaphor: committed today, perhaps divorced tomorrow. Jewishness by descent ties the future of Jewry largely to kinship and propinquity, the number of children that Jews give birth to. Jewishness by consent links the Jewish future to conversion and adhesion, the ability to attract newcomers and hold on to them.

Can Judaism, not to mention the traditional conception of the peoplehood of the Jews, be maintained in a world where consent has replaced descent?

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* See my article, "Interreligious Marriage in America," in *The Intermarriage Crisis: Jewish Communal Perspectives and Responses*, American Jewish Committee, 1991.

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Ours, then, is a moment of great transformation: of *dis*continuity. It is no wonder that Jewish communal leaders are distraught, or that many of them have been calling for a renewed emphasis on the tried and the true in Jewish life as a means of fighting discontinuity with continuity. But while many of their proposals are thoughtful, and some of them may even have some prospect of modest success, a general caveat is in order.

For this is hardly the first crisis of continuity the Jews have faced in their history. In the past, when Jewish life has been threatened by similar circumstances, the forces of recovery have come not just from those desperate to hold fast to the familiar but in addition—and most paradoxically—from those willing, or eager, to try a little discontinuity of their own.

Take, for example, the divisive 18th-century Jewish religious movement known as Hasidism. Cruel massacres, external political changes, crushing religious disappointments occasioned by the false messiahships of Shabbetai Zevi and Jacob Frank, and a profound crisis of leadership within the mainstream community were some of the factors that spawned this new socioreligious movement. Its emphasis on charismatic leadership and mystical fellowship stirred up intense opposition—but also proved immensely attractive to Jews who might otherwise have opted out.

In the 19th century, crises of continuity stimulated by emancipation, Enlightenment, and renewed anti-Semitism engendered such diverse religious and political movements as Reform Judaism, Conservative Judaism, and Zionism. Once again, these were movements that broke with key assumptions of an earlier day, creating enormous divisions and provoking charges that they were inimical to Judaism. Yet each in its own way powerfully strengthened the fabric of Judaism and in the end promoted Jewish continuity.

In still more recent times, and in the United States, we have the much less cataclysmic example of the Jewish day-school movement. Day schools, established for the most part within the last 50 years, generated fierce internal opposition because they challenged a basic assumption among American Jews concerning the sacrosanct nature of public education. Yet today most would agree that these schools have played a central role in promoting American Jewish continuity and keeping assimilation at bay.

In short, just as external discontinuities challenge Jewish stability, so internal discontinuities (at least of the right sort) may promote Jewish revitalization. No one can say, as yet, what today's or tomorrow's saving discontinuities will look like, but in a general way Jewish history offers grounds for optimism. Over the centuries, Jews have survived one doomsayer after another—not by ignoring or belittling predictions of gloom, or by succumbing to despair, but by instituting selective discontinuities that have, in the end, proved the predictions wrong. There, perhaps, lies the real secret of Jewish continuity in the Diaspora.

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The Left vs. Free Speech

John O. McGinnis

AN EXTRAORDINARY political realignment is occurring today: liberals and left-wing thinkers are now urging wide-ranging government regulation of speech. This shift away from what was once a virtually absolutist position favoring the unfettered exchange of information and ideas is already visible in the proliferation of campus speech codes and in the strong support that feminists have given to anti-pornography legislation. But attempts to limit expression in the name of multiculturalism or feminism are neither the most profound nor the most alarming indication of change. Although an organization like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for the most part still adheres to the older understanding of the First Amendment, growing numbers of liberals now support government supervision of speech, even when the fashionable categories of gender and race are not at stake.

Most of the advocates of the new and more jaundiced look at the First Amendment can be found on university and law-school faculties, but again, far more is at risk than the future of open inquiry on campus. The push to regulate speech comes at a moment when the silicon and fiber-optic revolutions are offering consumers a broad new range of information conduits, ranging from interactive cable television to wireless fax transmissions. To what extent should the government exercise control over the information that flows not only over old and tested channels of communication, but over these new channels as well?

In both cases, the answer of some on the Left is that it should do so to a great extent. One leading exponent of the new censorship is Morton Horwitz of the Harvard Law School. Horwitz is a pioneer in critical-legal studies, a watered-down Marxist philosophy in which legal and moral norms are seen as emanations of class interests. In the November 1993 *Harvard Law Review*, Horwitz deplores what he calls the Supreme Court's "laissez-faire" approach to speech. Denouncing the Court's decision in *R.A.V.* v. *City of St. Paul*, which struck down a provision criminalizing hate speech, he likens the reluctance of the current Court to infringe on the right of free speech to its predecessors' benighted aversion, earlier in the century, to government regulation of business. The very use of this comparison amounts to a sea change, for the Left has hitherto regarded free speech not only as inviolable but as wholly distinct from lowly property rights which are, and in its opinion should be, subject to a vast apparatus of government regulations and controls.

Horwitz, by contrast, openly rejects the notion that the judiciary is required to extend First Amendment protection to all regardless of the content of their speech. Indeed, he attacks today's Court for favoring what he calls the "universalization of the freedom of speech," because such an "abstract" doctrine prevents social change. In his view, a model for progressive First Amendment jurisprudence can be found instead in a series of decisions by courts during the Warren era favoring the rights of labor unions, minorities, and "dissidents." From these he draws the "practical" point that the First Amendment should be seen not as a vehicle for ensuring uninhibited debate, but as a tool for helping disadvantaged groups gain redress. In fact, Horwitz would appear to favor laws regulating expression if the end result serves to advance the political agenda of certain designated groups.

WHERE Morton Horwitz offers a legal justification for censorship, Stanley Fish, a professor at Duke University and a literary critic who has applied postmodernist literary theories to law, provides a philosophical foundation to underpin it—and a breathtakingly explicit one at that. In the title essay in his recent book, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech: And It's a Good Thing Too*,* Fish argues that free speech "is not an independent value, but a political prize," and any distinctions which the courts have drawn between protected and unprotected expression are "malleable." Like any other idea, concept, or argument, the principle of free speech is, for Fish, "inherently nothing" but one more noise in the "din and confusion of partisan struggle."

That being so, it is impossible in Fish's view for the courts to fashion neutral principles that will protect speech without discriminating on the basis of what is being said. The very purpose of his essay, he candidly states, is to free the "liberal Left" from that illusory concept, adherence to which can prevent it from achieving its goals. While the only policy prescription Fish openly draws is that hate speech be forbidden, his argument offers a rationale for unlimited restrictions on speech to promote the political interests of the Left.

THE arguments of Horwitz and Fish are both to the Left of mainstream liberalism, but enthusiasm for government control of speech is by no means limited to their

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* See the review by Daniel J. Silver in COMMENTARY, February 1994.

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particular precincts. Cass Sunstein, a liberal constitutional-law scholar at the University of Chicago who is occasionally mentioned as a future Clinton choice for the Supreme Court, has also argued in support of regulation. In his latest book, *Democracy and the Problem of Free Speech*,* Sunstein maintains that just as increased government control was necessary in the 1930's to promote social welfare, more government regulation of speech is necessary today to promote the optimal dispersion of information in a democratic society.

What we need, Sunstein says, is a "New Deal for Speech." A well-functioning democracy cannot be sustained if its communications industry is constitutionally immune from regulation; the capricious pressures of the market prohibit the presentation of a diversity of viewpoints, promote "entertainment values" rather than serious discussion of the news, and encourage a "sound-bite" journalism that fails to provide political candidates and public-policy advocates with sufficient airtime to convey their ideas to the public. To overcome this market failure, Sunstein invokes no less an authority than James Madison in arguing that government should impose whatever regulatory measures may be required to ensure that a fully informed citizenry can carry out its democratic responsibilities.

SUCH, in very brief summary, are the arguments of the First Amendment revisionists. As I have argued elsewhere,† they are shaky on both constitutional and philosophical grounds, and the assumptions behind them are easily challenged. But the more interesting political question is: whence this sudden enthusiasm on the Left for abandoning free speech in favor of government regulation?

After all, commitment to free speech has long been a centerpiece of modern liberalism, and it is a commitment which, these days, would seem to have paid off handsomely. The concerned citizen, if he likes, can spend his entire waking day glued to C-Span, engrossed in the unexpurgated speeches of his elected representatives. Or he can surf the Internet, enjoying instant and even interactive access to public-policy debates with exponents of every old and new idea ever advocated on heaven or earth. Why, in a world where the sources of public-policy information are more varied, more ubiquitous, and less expensive than ever before, is the Left suddenly inviting government intervention?

The answer is straightforward. Elements on the Left have begun to oppose a free market in ideas for the same reason that inefficient, failing companies favor government regulation of their product market: they fear competition and hope to retard it.

Up until the late 1970's, liberals and leftists alike were confident that the tools of social science and the broad dissemination of its findings could be employed, by means of massive government intervention, to transform society in a progressive direction. This confidence, however, has been thoroughly undermined by recent developments. On the hard Left, the moral bankruptcy and collapse of Communist regimes have discredited the ideas of "scientific" socialism. Among democratic socialists, the sclerotic condition of welfare states in Europe and elsewhere has made it increasingly difficult to argue that egalitarian policies are compatible with growing, flourishing economies. And for liberals here at home, the dismal consequences of Great Society programs aimed at alleviating the condition of the urban poor are visible to anyone with eyes to see.

Social science itself has shifted in a way that undermines the Left. Researchers in psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and economics are increasingly discovering, as the historian Carl N. Degler notes in his recent *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought*, that much of human behavior is rooted in biology rather than in social convention. This conclusion has political implications that are deeply discomfiting to liberal opinion, with its commitment to the precept that human beings are largely at liberty to remake society as they will. If human nature is substantially shaped by biology, the scope for successful social engineering is necessarily curtailed.

These considerations may seem unduly abstract and even academic, yet they find expression in all sorts of public ways and at every level of public consciousness. Even the runaway success of Rush Limbaugh cannot be fully explained without reference to the collapse of liberal verities and the rise of a conservative counterculture in the marketplace of ideas.

Similarly, the Left opposes school vouchers at least in part because they pose an impediment to its exercise of centralized control over the consciousness of the young through multicultural curricula, such as the "Children of the Rainbow," and other forms of indoctrination.

In short, many on the Left now prefer to create a system of information dispersion which can be captured politically rather than take their chances with a regime where citizens choose to listen to ideas only if they find them a persuasive explanation of the world or otherwise valuable.

In light of their ebbing faith, it is no longer surprising that some on the Left are seeking to lay the groundwork for a speech regime that would serve as a life-support system for their own antiquated, disproven, and increasingly unpopular ideas. That they are willing in the process to jettison a central precept of their own faith, and a cornerstone of our constitutional arrangements, is a measure of an extremity born of desperation.

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* Reviewed by Daniel E. Troy in COMMENTARY, January 1994.

† "The Partial Republican," *William and Mary Law Review* (Summer 1994).

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Megan's Law & the "New York Times"

Midge Decter

PROBABLY there are by now few people who have not heard the story of Megan Kanka of Hamilton Township, New Jersey—or at least some story similar to it. It is the kind of story, indeed, to which we are in danger of becoming inured because of its familiarity: how one day during this past July Megan, seven years old, went missing and after a frantic search was found discarded in some tall grass not far from her house, raped and strangled. Shortly thereafter, a thirty-three-year-old man named Jesse Timmendequas was arrested and then confessed to the crime.

Timmendequas had twice before been convicted of sexually assaulting young girls, had spent six years in what the press referred to as a "treatment facility," and had only recently been released and returned, as they say, to the community. Along with two other sexual-offender "rehabilitees," he had been living in the house across the street from Megan's. After he was apprehended, neighbors told reporters, as neighbors in these circumstances so often do, that he had been a quiet man.

The citizens of Hamilton Township were naturally outraged—by the crime itself, of course, but almost as much by the fact that no one had informed them of the criminal history of their new neighbors. They quickly organized themselves and began to circulate a petition—which has been signed so far by more than 200,000 New Jerseyans—demanding the passage of a state law that would require correction officials to notify people when a sex offender has moved into their neighborhood. Their crusade is succeeding and has spread to New York, where similar legislation will soon be proposed in the State Assembly.

The demand for such notification is not new. In various forms and guises, it has recently figured in numerous proposals to toughen the criminal-justice system and offer more protection to potential victims and less to violent, or potentially violent, criminals.

In any event, it seems certain that in many places beyond New Jersey and New York, people are gearing up to initiate referenda or to engage in other forms of public protest against what appears to be the regnant liberal preoccupation with the privacy rights and other privileges of violent criminals, particularly sex offenders.

NOWHERE has this preoccupation been more in evidence than in an editorial published in the *New York Times* on August 15 under the title, "Dealing With Sex Offenders." What happened to Megan Kanka was a "genuine tragedy," the editorial begins; small wonder that her neighbors, together with much of New Jersey's political leadership, are demanding a crackdown on sex offenders who have been released from jail. Understandable as is the emotion behind this demand, however, the *Times* would caution everyone not to be too hasty.

It is true, the *Times* acknowledges, that those who wish to have "new stringencies" imposed on sex offenders are speaking for millions of Americans. Nevertheless, the *Times* believes that some of the measures currently being proposed for dealing with these offenders are likely to do more harm than good: for example, that sex offenders be required to register with the police departments of the towns they settle in; or that they be required to report their whereabouts every 30 days; or that the police be required to notify the residents of a neighborhood of a sex offender's presence there; or, most stringent of all, that sex offenders be made to spend the rest of their lives in prison "unless they can convince officials that they have been rehabilitated."

All this, the *Times* fears, could "destroy the efforts of thousands of law-abiding former sex offenders to rebuild their lives."

The demand for notification is, as the *Times* sees it, particularly problematic. "Why, for instance, should a sex offender be branded when a released drug dealer, armed robber, or murderer is not?" It is argued that the rate of recidivism among sex offenders is so high, the editorial continues, that it is better to be safe than sorry. However, "treatment experts" disagree. In the opinion of these experts, says the editorial, not only are the recidivism rates exaggerated, "but [they] depend on a range of factors, including the nature of the crime and whether the offender received treatment." Moreover, although "several therapies have been shown to lower recidivism rates, the vast majority of jailed sex offenders get no help at all."

Be that as it may, "Community-notification laws do little or nothing to prevent a sex offender from striking again; they simply make it more likely that the offender will be hounded from one town to another"—possibly becoming even more dangerous than he might otherwise be, away from the control of family and friends.

Conversely, the editorial worries, such a system involves the danger of vigilantism. That this danger is real can be seen from the community-notification system in the state of Washington, which has led to incidents of assault, arson, slashed tires, and loss of employment and housing.

How, then, the *Times* asks, can we craft a system that protects a community from those against whom it must be protected without stigmatizing those from whom it need not be protected? The answer is, "Carefully . . . and without

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hysteria." Registration programs that help the police keep track of released sex offenders, "under court supervision that assures procedures meet constitutional safeguards," may well "have a place in a careful police program." Furthermore, "Penalties for preying on children can be toughened . . . and juvenile offenders need early counseling and treatment."

People who have been speaking for the Megans of this world speak from the heart, concludes the *Times*. "Now it is time for Americans to use their heads as well."

THERE are, to be sure, very good reasons for sharing the *Times*'s skepticism about the practical value of notification procedures. After all, when it comes down to it, what are the now-informed neighbors of a recently released rapist and/or child molester to do? Keep their children permanently indoors? Move away? The only really practical step would be to impress upon their new neighbor the advisability of *his* moving on, i.e., "vigilantism"—something most decent people would, if they were capable of it at all, find most repellent. The citizens of Hamilton Township and their fellow petitioners are perhaps focusing what would otherwise be unmanageable rage, fear, and grief on the more manageable demand for notification.

The real issue for the residents of Hamilton Township is not that they were left ignorant of Jesse Timmendequas's past but the question of what a man with two prior convictions for sexually assaulting young girls was doing in their, or anybody else's, neighborhood in the first place—after only six years in a "treatment facility." Obviously he had convinced the authorities that he was cured and now ready to become one more of the *Times*'s "thousands of law-abiding former sex offenders" out to rebuild his life.

The *Times* relies for its complacency about these people on certain "treatment experts." But there are other experts who strongly doubt that any known programs of rehabilitation can really work to cure violent sex offenders. Thus, the eminent criminologist John J. DiIulio, Jr. of Princeton recently noted in an op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* that in his researches he has come upon no such program that could responsibly be called successful. Readers of the *Times*'s news columns, if not of its editorial page, are provided more than ample anecdotal evidence to support DiIulio. Almost every week, it seems, one rapist-murderer after another turns out to have been on parole or probation after a prior conviction for the same crime or one almost like it.

So much for the dismal news about rape in general. Beyond this, we move into the subcategory represented by Megan Kanka.

Most people, unconfused by "enlightened" social theories, instinctively understand that a man who is capable of raping a very small child—or a baby in its crib, for we have in these times lived to witness even this—occupies a very special rank of evil, far, far beyond the human territory that is bounded by terms like "rehabilitation" and "law-abiding," or even normal punishment.

Such a man is not, as the *Times* would have us believe, in the same class as a drug dealer, or an ordinary murderer, or even, dare one say it?, a rapist of grown women. A person unconfused by fancy social theory might even wonder how someone can commit so unspeakable an act and still find himself worthy to go on living, never mind to be released from incarceration. From whom can he dare to seek understanding, let alone forgiveness—his family, his friends, his prison mates, his therapist? Life imprisonment without parole for the sexual assaulter of a little girl is not only the one truly safe decision from the point of view of society; it might, ironically, be an act of kindness to the rapist as well.

IT IS unlikely that any such thought has ever entered the mind of the author of that *Times* editorial. Partly, no doubt, from a growing habituation to stories like Megan's, but also in no small part out of an unexamined body of pieties about crime and criminals, those who share the *Times*'s views of violent crime have a way of slipping beyond the reality of the criminal behavior they set out to contemplate. Molesters of children, as we know, were once upon a time shunned even in prison and even by the most brutal of their fellow inmates. They were *special*. But it appears that what was once a point of moral clarity among even the lowest of criminals is now regarded by our leading newspaper as a possibly understandable but nevertheless dangerous form of "hysteria."

Which is why the *Times*'s call to exercise care in crafting a system to deal with this problem is one that it might itself profitably heed in "crafting" its own response to crimes and criminals. Denial, too, is a form of hysteria, and often a very dangerous one. And what but profound denial—especially at a time when Americans are all too justifiably distressed about out-of-control violence—would lead someone to go on reciting that old mantra, "counseling and treatment"?

Vigilantism is certainly not to be taken lightly. Yet anyone thinking seriously about how to forestall it would not, in the year 1994, be worrying about the possible stigmatization of released sex offenders. He would, rather, be worrying about how to restore a little sanity to a criminal-justice system that, when it comes to dealing with really serious crime, has been rendered virtually impotent by a now merely automatic and mindless obsession with the rights of the criminals.

In other words, that the rape-murder of Megan Kanka by a third-time offender should have been seized upon as the occasion for issuing a caution that not all rapists are recidivists, is the sign of something seriously out of whack in the moral understanding of the *Times* and those for whom it speaks.

The treatment for this condition, if there is one, would have to begin with a heavy course of immersion in reality. So far the recidivism rate for perpetrators of mindless piety does not provide much ground for hope. But who knows what new and effective therapy might one day soon be in the offing?—perhaps the ensconcement of an unannounced two-time rapist in the house across the street.

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From the Finland Station

LENIN: A NEW BIOGRAPHY. By DIMITRI VOLKOGONOV. TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY HAROLD SHUKMAN. *Free Press. 599 pp. $30.00.*

Reviewed by ADAM B. ULAM

THOUGH his has been an unusual career, the life story of Dmitri Volkogonov epitomizes and explains much that has happened to the Soviet Union and Communism.

As he told us in his biography of Stalin (1989), Volkogonov's father was executed when he was a child, and his family was banished to Siberia. For his Russian readers, Volkogonov did not need to specify the date or the alleged offense that led to his father's death. Certainly most of his countrymen would know that the time was somewhere between 1937 and 1940, and that, like 99.9 percent of those purged, the elder Volkogonov was innocent of any real crime. They also would have understood that very likely the Volkogonovs were simple folk. Had the father been a prominent "enemy of the people," his wife would have been sent to a camp, his children placed in an orphanage and quite possibly arrested themselves upon reaching adulthood.

Somehow, despite his father's fate, Volkogonov was allowed to enter a military school, and his career flourished after Stalin's death: three-star general and head of the Army's political department are among the ranks he achieved. As the preceding suggests and as he himself acknowledges, Volkogonov remained throughout a loyal Communist; Stalin's death was seen as a national calamity by young Lieutenant Volkogonov in 1953.

It was only with glasnost that the blinders began to fall from his eyes. His biography of Stalin went far beyond the then-still-current official equivocations about the tyrant and euphemisms like the "cult of personality." Volkogonov's portrait was that of a mass murderer and sadist whose only interest was personal power, unencumbered by any ideological or patriotic inhibitions. This was in contrast to Gorbachev who, as late as 1987, while acknowledging Stalin's crimes, still proclaimed him a great military leader and hailed collectivization as a grandiose feat of social engineering.

For a Western student of Soviet history, little fundamentally new could be found in Volkogonov's book on Stalin. But his access to closed archives enabled him to fill in some horrifying details. For example, he estimated the number of those "repressed" between 1937 and 1941 alone at about five million, with a million and a half of them executed.

Although Volkogonov was demoted to the directorship of the Military History Institute not long before his biography of Stalin was published, in at least one key respect the book remained within the prevailing Soviet orthodoxy: it portrayed Lenin as a benevolent if not infallible genius. The root of Stalin's crimes was held to be his departure from the straight and narrow path to socialism as prescribed by the Founder. And Volkogonov also defended the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939, in the traditional Soviet manner, as a necessary response to the Western powers' obvious intention to push Hitler eastward (an explanation that never managed to explain satisfactorily why Britain and France declared war on Germany after its invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939).

Volkogonov's subsequent biography of Trotsky (1992), however, represented a greater departure. Trotsky was given an equal if not indeed a major share of the credit for the mechanics of the October Revolution and winning the civil war. Though he was unsparing in his criticism of Trotsky's authoritarian temperament and misdeeds, one could detect a twinge of sympathy in Volkogonov's treatment of his subject: could a man who hated Stalin and was so much hated by him have been completely bad?

Now, in his latest work, Volkogonov departs even farther from the old Soviet orthodoxy. Lenin, whom he eulogized only four years ago, is now cast as a cruel and querulous fanatic. "Thanks chiefly to Lenin's efforts, the Bolsheviks succeeded in convincing the Russian people that the path to happiness lay through lawlessness, arbitrary rule, and violence." For Volkogonov now, as for Solzhenitsyn, it is Lenin rather than Stalin who is mainly responsible for the evil inherent in Communism. "By his actions Lenin taught Stalin his ruthlessness, his implacability, his cunning, his purposefulness. . . ."

This book is not so much a biography in the strict sense of the word as, to use a notorious Stalinist term, an "unmasking." Volkogonov's animus against anything connected with Lenin and Communism is so great that it extends to the private lives of his one-time heroes. For example, the book presents Lenin as using party funds to lead a life of near-luxury as a political émigré. In fact, Lenin's material circumstances were quite modest while abroad (though he did indulge in such unproletarian diversions as mountain climbing, bicycling, and attending the theater).

Another note on the private side of things: some of Lenin's previous biographers (including myself) have cast doubts on the long-whispered story of a liaison with Inessa Armand; Lenin seemed incapable of any passion, except for revolution, and his public views on sex were distinctly Victorian. But having had access to materials hitherto withheld by the prudish Soviets, Volkogonov presents

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strong, if circumstantial, evidence that Lenin and Armand were, literally, comrades in arms.

MANY a Western intellectual who, while rejecting Communism, still sees Lenin's personal saga and the October Revolution surrounded by a heroic aura will be perplexed at this sober account by a former believer who now regards both Lenin and the Revolution as unmitigated disasters for Russia and the world. Indeed, the author's revulsion now embraces the entire ideological and historical ballast of Communism, including the idea of socialism itself.

What accounts for this passionate assault on the old verities from a man who so recently was singing Lenin's praise? True, in the course of his research Volkogonov was able to acquaint himself with a large quantity of previously inaccessible materials by and about Lenin which added little to the Soviet founder's image as a benefactor of mankind. But there was no need for fresh revelations or newly opened archives to discover that Lenin was a firm believer in terror, and utterly heedless of what his policies cost in human lives. There was enough testimony on those counts even in the carefully edited works published during the Soviet period.

Volkogonov's resentment of his erstwhile idol is attributable, one suspects, to the shock produced by the fall of the Soviet empire in 1991. He traces the root causes of that crash to the imposition of Communism on what had been unambiguously the *Russian* empire. Lenin, he asserts, "had shown his contempt—to put it mildly—for Russia and the Russians." In the *Soviet* Union, "The national feeling of the Russians was suppressed, and the build-up began of the centrifugal forces that would one day smash the Union."

Here it is difficult to agree with Volkogonov. By creating a centralized, authoritarian state, Lenin had ensured, though perhaps not consciously, that it would be dominated by its major ethnic group. And Stalin, though a Georgian, quite consciously and openly substituted Russian nationalism for Communist ideology as the main psychological prop of the Soviet regime. In lamenting the fall of the Union, Volkogonov, a Russian patriot, unwittingly demonstrates how much in fact the USSR was thought of as Greater Russia. Russians were clearly held by the regime to be "more equal" than other nationalities, not only politically but also culturally.

To be sure, it was not only anti-Russian sentiments that led the Soviet Union to split asunder; indigenous nationalism also played a part. Even before the abortive 1991 coup, when the Union began to crumble, many of the local non-Russian Communist bosses, until then submissive servants of Moscow, hastened to refashion themselves as nationalists in order to retain and increase their power.

ACCURATE as it is in most respects, Volkogonov's portrait occasionally lacks nuance; Lenin's political evolution is not the rigid straight line that Volkogonov has drawn. In the years before World War I, Lenin was not yet the fire-breathing revolutionary who declared, when the German Socialists voted for war credits in 1914, that Russian Marxists should cast off the very name of socialist "like a soiled child's shirt" and work for a revolution. And Lenin, the ferocious advocate of terrorism in 1918-22, as he lay dying from his final illness, was aware of the considerable substratum of Russian chauvinism underlying Communism; he also criticized Stalin and Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the Soviet secret police, as being no better than their czarist predecessors (would that that were all) in their brutality and disregard of the non-Russians' rights.

But Volkogonov is essentially correct when he portrays Lenin as a great teacher of intolerance. The bulk of those who joined the Nazis before 1933 were thugs and social misfits. For the most part, the same cannot be said for those who became Bolsheviks before 1917. While not necessarily idealists (a much misused term in American parlance), they joined what was one faction of a social-democratic party out of genuine conviction. Few of them could have imagined that "Bolshevik" would become synonymous with one-party rule, dictatorship, and terror.

What then transformed these individuals into complacent oligarchs, henchmen of a tyrant, and, at a lower level, secret-police inquisitors, executioners, with not a trace of ideological scruple? Granted that a civil war usually numbs morals, the main answer still has to be: Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

Immediately after the October Revolution, the residue of social-democratic sentiment was still strong enough for several prominent Bolsheviks to oppose Lenin's insistence on one-party government. Even after the civil war drew to a close in 1921, while voices for democracy were silenced, there was still some opposition in Bolshevik ranks to Lenin's authoritarian ways: he was turning party members into record players, complained one delegate at the Tenth Party Congress; he was the chief bureaucrat, said another—utterances that would become unthinkable under Stalin's dictatorship.

Still, by hook or by crook, Lenin always got his way. Even to his opponents in the party he was not only a leader but a kind of magician. Neither a military commander nor a great orator, he somehow pushed his mostly hesitant or resisting followers toward a revolutionary resolve. Against overwhelming odds, Lenin conjured up victory in the civil war. How could one disagree with his teachings about dictatorship and terror when they brought about such miraculous results? A man as instinctively decent as Bukharin was persuaded to go along with phony trials complete with death penalties for "bourgeois specialists" falsely accused of sabotage.

SOME of this book's most interesting pages and intriguing revelations from the party archives touch on the history of the Soviet system following Lenin's death. There, for instance, is Marshal Zhukov reading a document at the June 1957 Central Committee meeting which shows that on one day, November 12, 1938, "Stalin and Molotov ordered the execution of 3,167 se-

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nior figures." We also get new details revealing how, even before the Moscow trials of the Bolshevik old guard in 1936-38, the defendants groveled in front of Stalin and continued to denounce one another until the last possible moment before they were destroyed. (Let us remember, however, that they begged not only for their own lives, but also for those of their families—in most cases unsuccessfully on both counts.)

Nor does Volkogonov see much that is good about Stalin's successors. Khrushchev is praised for the courage he displayed in his denunciation, qualified though it was, of Stalin. But he is also criticized for using "Lenin to debunk Stalin, as if Lenin had not been the spiritual father of Stalin." And we have a pathetic picture of the seventy-seven-year-old Khrushchev bravely resisting pressure from his former subordinates to repudiate his memoirs after they had been smuggled abroad.

Brezhnev is portrayed here as the epitome of the complacent Soviet bureaucrat, with his inordinate passion for decorations and awards of all possible kinds provoking amusement even within party circles. Andropov comes across as far more intelligent than his two predecessors, but also as much more of a doctrinaire Leninist. And there is Chernenko, sick and debilitated, mirroring the system over which he briefly presided.

Of the man who unwittingly contributed so much to the collapse of the whole system, Volkogonov is of two minds. Paradoxically, Gorbachev is both praised and criticized for perestroika. Reforms were obviously needed, but how could they succeed if to the last the General Secretary clung to Leninism and an idealized version of the October Revolution? Volkogonov, a strong supporter of Yeltsin, to whom he has been a special consultant, tries to dispel the Western notion that Gorbachev, prior to 1985, was a closet liberal; he quotes several of his statements before the Politburo that might well have been made by Brezhnev.

What Talleyrand said of treason under revolutionary conditions fully applies to the liberalism of individual politicians within the Soviet context: it is a question of dates. The pathos of the last phase of the Soviet era is well expressed in the Politburo discussion of the address Gorbachev was to deliver on the 70th anniversary of the Revolution. "We don't need any kind of bourgeois pluralism," said Gorbachev, as we learn from this book. Apparently he had even proposed to speak favorably about the Stalinist policy of liquidating kulaks during collectivization. But here Shevardnadze intervened: "I am worried about one phrase, although it is correct in principle. . . . Maybe we could drop 'liquidating' and find some other word." And so they tried to change their world through new terms, new laws, new institutions, the somber past always getting in their way. As of the moment they are still trying.

That somewhat worn-out phrase, "identity crisis," for once fits perfectly the current condition of Russia. And in grasping its complexity, one gets much help from General

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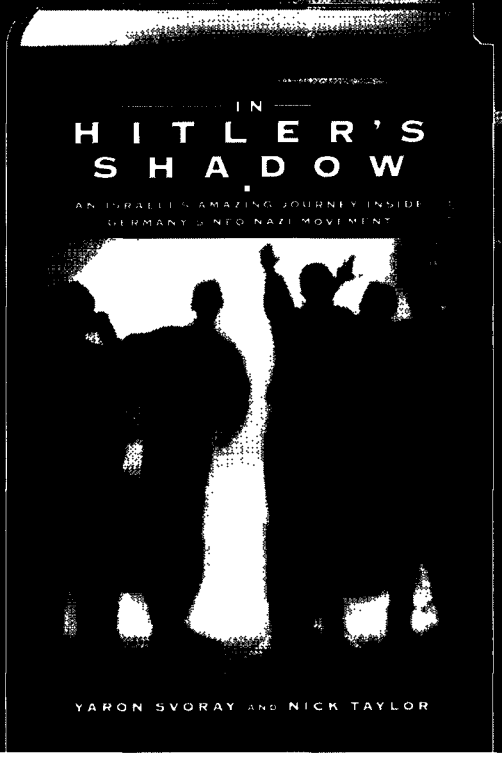

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Volkogonov. He is a very interesting man who has written a most instructive book.

"One of the People"

ELUSIVE PROPHET: AHAD HA'AM AND THE ORIGINS OF ZIONISM. BY STEVEN J. ZIPPERSTEIN. *University of California Press. 411 pp. $35.00.*

Reviewed by ALAN MINTZ

LIKE other creations of the postwar era, Israel has recently been shaken by sweeping political changes. The decline of the socialist ethos, the retreat from state ownership of industry, the rise of militant religious parties, mass immigration from the former Soviet Union, the opening of direct negotiations with the Arab world—these and other factors have broken up the fragile national consensus forged in the generation of David Ben-Gurion, and have forced the opening of debate about national purpose and identity.

It is a time when a nation naturally looks back to the convictions of its founders in order to sort out its future. Yet, unhelpfully, the history of Zionism is long on ideology and short on ideas. There is no lack of the kind of absolute political positions over which controversies rage, commissions are formed, and parties endlessly splinter and recombine. Yet genuine political ideas which possess conceptual nuance and cultural depth, and which can be returned to periodically for perspective on the present moment, are in short supply.

It is unfortunate, then, that the name of Ahad Ha'am, the greatest purveyor of serious ideas in the Zionist tradition, should arise so infrequently in the current discussion. Ahad Ha'am, which in Hebrew means "one of the people"—a shrewd choice for one of the great aristocratic elitists of modern Jewish life—was the pen name of Asher Ginzberg (1856-1927), a Hebrew essayist whose legacy is called cultural or spiritual Zionism. He was distinguished from political Zionists (the followers of Theodor Herzl) and from the early socialist pioneers both in the depth of his background in Jewish classical learning and in his rootedness in the English political thought of Mill and Spencer rather than in the writings of Russian revolutionaries. In Israel today, Ahad Ha'am is one of those cultural monuments that gather more dust than readership.

That this neglect is regrettable is made abundantly clear in Steven J. Zipperstein's new book. It has always been difficult to separate what Ahad Ha'am actually said from the small stock of slogans that came to caricature his thought. The essays in which he presented himself to the world are not systematic presentations but elliptical and allusive performances, polemical responses to controversies in the public arena. The essays are profound and elegant, but their inspiration is almost always occasional; without knowing the occasion it is often hard to get the message.

The linguistic obstacles are also formidable. Ahad Ha'am wrote in an original Hebrew style that distilled the many historical layers of the language; his work remains accessible to the educated Israeli but not without effort. But because Hebrew was not yet spoken at the time, Ahad Ha'am's *life*, in all its public and private aspects, took place in Russian and Yiddish, and his intellectual horizons were shaped by reading in German and English.

Zipperstein does an excellent job in guiding us across this polyglot cultural map. Ahad Ha'am's life spanned the formative stages of Zionism—the proto-Zionist *Hovevei Zion* movement, Herzlian diplomacy and mass-movement politics, and the behind-the-scenes negotiations leading up to the 1917 Balfour Declaration—and Zipperstein adroitly illuminates the controversies that provided the stimulus and context for the big ideas enunciated in the essays.

What were those ideas? Ahad Ha'am differed with his great antagonist Theodor Herzl not over tactics but over the fundamental analysis of the so-called "Jewish question." For Herzl, the problem was the safety of European Jewry, and the solution was a territorial refuge. For Ahad Ha'am, it was the profound crisis provoked by Judaism's encounter with modernity, which, by vitiating the inner coherence of Jewish life, had put the people's survival in jeopardy.

Ahad Ha'am saw no solution to the demise of religious culture in the socialist Zionism propounded by the leaders of the Jewish settlement in Palestine. The wholesale negation of Diaspora Judaism and the creation of a new culture that was rooted in the this-worldly values of labor and land could not, to his mind, sustain the spiritual needs of the nation. Nor did it have anything vital to say to the great majority of Jews who would never live in the Land.

Instead, Ahad Ha'am argued for the development of a modern national Jewish culture which would be informed by the deep ethical insights of Judaism, with its allied traditions of learning and literary creativity as embodied in the Hebrew language. This national culture would be lived in its purest form by a vanguard in the land of Israel, and would serve as a model enriching the lives of Jewish communities throughout the world.

THERE is much to be said about this vision, and about the question of its relevance today. But before addressing that issue I should point out that perhaps the major contribution of Zipperstein's life of Ahad Ha'am is to elucidate not so much what the master said as what he did. Ahad Ha'am is usually pictured—and certainly pictured himself—as a retiring sage who periodically emerged from his study to make a statement of great import to the nation. Zipperstein convincingly demonstrates that he was in fact a political infighter of great acuity, who was never for a moment unengaged in the fractious national movement. Attending political meetings, he confessed in a letter written later in life, was an addiction from which he never managed to wean himself.

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In the struggles for power in the Zionist movement Ahad Ha'am was at a disadvantage because he advocated a gradualist politics and an elitist cultural idiom. Lacking the mass base Herzl had won by appealing to the messianic sentiments of East European Jewry, he had to compete by different methods.

To leverage his power, he drew on his great strength: the production of ideas. In particular, his conception of Zionism as a higher stage in the development of Jewish civilization rather than as a revolutionary break with the past had special authority for the circles around Chaim Weizmann, whose work proved critical to the success of the nationalist cause. In Ahad Ha'am's writings, Weizmann and his generation found a cultural vision they could obtain neither from the Herzlian politicians, whose Zionism was a response to post-emancipatory anti-Semitism in Western Europe, nor from the socialist worker-intellectuals.

Yet the reverential esteem in which Ahad Ha'am was held by many of his contemporaries cannot in the end be explained by the ideas alone, which were often vague and ill-suited to the actualities of the movement. To account for the phenomenon, Zipperstein invokes the model of the hasidic *rebbe* and his court, and suggests that the figure of Ahad Ha'am inspired the same kind of worshipful devotion in many of the nationalist intellectuals of the time.

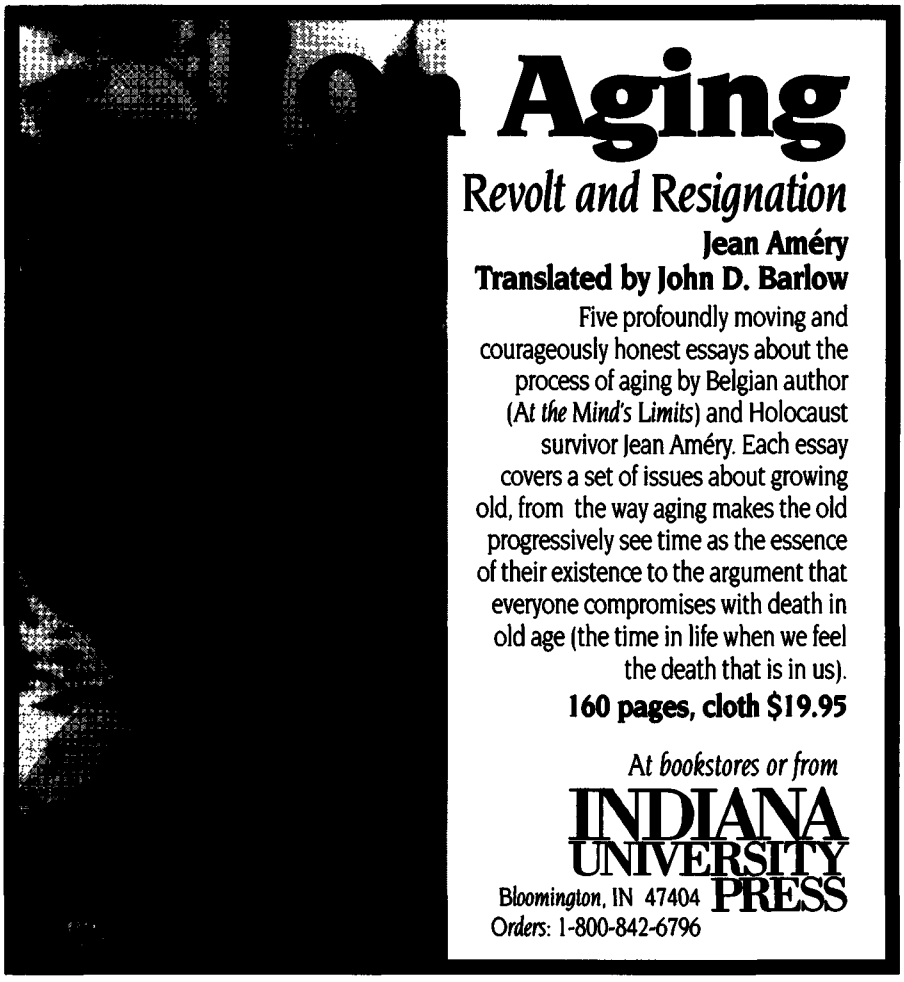
Given the sternly rationalist tenor of Ahad Ha'am's thought, this would seem to be an unlikely frame of reference. As a boy, however, Ahad Ha'am had in fact been deeply absorbed in the spiritual world of Hasidism. Although he later rejected it in favor of the Enlightenment, it was relatively easy for him, Zipperstein argues, to assume the role of the revered sage who believed utterly in the truth of his own teachings and who, while suffering himself to be admired by the many from afar, felt most at home among the small circle of disciples in his drawing room in Odessa. In Ahad Ha'am they for their part found their "rabbi," and willingly made his utterances into a new scripture.

Finally, peeking out from behind the folds of this carefully cultivated mystique are glimpses of a man and his family who were at times deeply troubled. Throughout his life, Ahad Ha'am was visited by a mysterious "nervous illness" that robbed him of sleep and prevented him from working. During the final years of his life, which he spent much-honored in the new city of Tel Aviv, he was so debilitated by insomnia and the drugs he took to combat it that he could barely leave his bed. His wife was similarly afflicted, and one of his daughters ended up spending her life in a sanitarium.

Although Zipperstein resolutely refuses to become his subject's psychoanalyst, he provides enough pathogenic material—what Ahad Ha'am's parents did to him and what he went on to do to his own children—to sustain future biographers so inclined.

WHAT, then, of the relevance of Ahad Ha'am's vision today? One problem with that vision, besides its studied fuzziness, is that it did not own up to the enormity of the painful discontinuities in Jewish life created by the collapse of religion, but rather sought to paper over them with vague appeals to an elusive "national spirit." In the decades since Ahad Ha'am wrote, those disjunctions have, if anything, become more acute for many Jews, while for others the rise of a new and more militant religiosity has created fresh disjunctions of its own. Nonetheless, Ahad Ha'am's approach had and still retains the huge advantage of taking the heritage of Jewish culture—including Jewish religious culture—seriously, and creating a Zionism which addresses the needs of the Jewish people as a whole.

Looking at Israel today, and considering the rich weave of cultures that have emerged after the breakup of Ben-Gurion's assertive and monolithic statism, one is tempted to say that in some respects Ahad Ha'am, the forgotten "elusive pro-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phet," has had the last laugh. Certainly for many Jews around the world, Israel itself has come to serve as a spiritual center that informs their lives. Meanwhile, within Israel, there is a palpable yearning for a new articulation of Jewish national culture, one that might somehow bring together the fractious subcultures of the state. Perhaps the time has come, then, to give Ahad Ha'am another look.

The High-Cholesterol State

DEMOSCLEROSIS: THE SILENT KILLER OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT. BY JONATHAN RAUCH. *Times Books. 250 pp. $22.00.*

Reviewed by TOD LINDBERG

"DEMOSCLEROSIS," in Jonathan Rauch's diagnosis, is "government's progressive loss of the ability to adapt." Ever since World War II, he maintains, powerful underlying social forces have intersected with a structural weakness in modern democratic politics to allow entrenched interests to dominate government. This brief but sweeping book, by a contributing editor of the *National Journal*, is an attempt to describe and analyze those forces. Rauch's hope is that if we cannot liberate ourselves from their grip, we can at least prevent them from choking off whatever vitality remains in American life.

Taking as his departure point Mancur Olson's classic study of political economy, *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965), Rauch argues here that as the share of the American economy under government control has increased, the potential benefits accruing to organizations (and their members) have soared, while the cost of forming and maintaining organizations has declined. The result is that Americans have divided themselves into ever more numerous, large, and powerful groups, each willing to exploit the power of government to advance its own claims on the nation's resources.

For government, the consequence has been not paralysis but palsy. Government can still act—even in the Reagan and Bush years of divided-government "gridlock," Congress passed thousands of pages of legislation—but it lacks the ability to look afresh at social problems, to recognize its own failures, and to pursue truly innovative solutions. Government, in Rauch's telling, has lost its capacity for experimentation—the method of trial and error that is essential to success in every other area of endeavor.

There is ample evidence to suggest that something like this has happened in recent years. Unquestionably there has been an explosive growth in lobbying. In 1976, there were just over 3,000 registered lobbyists; by 1992, the number exceeded 7,500. Virtually irresistible super-lobbies have come to the fore. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which had fewer than a million members in 1965, could by 1990 intimidate lawmakers with a roll of over 30-million members—more than three-quarters of all Social Security recipients.

The organizations that succeed in dipping into the federal trough are not the only ones to grow fat. Rauch points to a vast "parasite economy"—especially the army of lawyers who profit as the government shifts resources around. The number of lawyers per capita in the United States was virtually stable for a century until 1970, and then it doubled; in Washington, D.C., the total number of lawyers quadrupled from 1972 to 1987.

The direct and indirect economic costs of all of this "transfer-seeking" activity are staggeringly high. Quite apart from the expense of "parasite food" for lawyers and lobbyists, a much higher price tag is attached to the subsidies that are "marbled all through the economy and embedded deeply within it. When you go to the store, the labels don't tell you how much . . . farm subsidies raise the prices of bread and fruit." Rauch cites estimates of the total annual cost of "transfer-seeking" as somewhere between 5 and 12 percent of the gross national product, or $300 billion to $700 billion.

These are not trivial sums. But Rauch is concerned more with the political than with the economic costs of "demosclerosis." Here it is important to register that he is no Ross Perot, railing against the "special interests" and arguing that if only we rid ourselves of them, all would be well. On the contrary, he believes that the problem is not "them," it is "us." The real threat in "demosclerosis" is the stake that each of us, in Rauch's telling, has in it.

For this reason, he writes, "Demosclerosis isn't a problem you solve. It's a problem you manage." Because the forces that encourage it are permanent, he suggests trying to limit government's virtually unbounded authority to transfer resources, the spring from which all parasitism flows. In particular he advocates decentralization—devolving "whole functions to lower levels of government"—and warring against the "parasite economy" through an end to deficit spending (which aggravates the problem by borrowing resources from the future for distribution today). He also favors aggressively cutting subsidies, deregulating the economy, and promoting freer global trade.

THESE, of course, are all familiar palliatives, and their eminent good sense leads to the central weakness of *Demosclerosis*. Putting such sensible remedies in place is going to demand "political leadership," Rauch says, in a trite observation he reserves for the close of his book. But if good political leadership is essential to the cure of demosclerosis, why has he never mentioned bad political leadership as at least a partial cause of the disease?

Government has reached its current size and level of intrusiveness in American life not because the irresistible laws of political economy inexorably force it to grow, as Rauch maintains, but because ambitious people and political movements have entertained, and executed, ambitious plans for it. It is not impersonal forces that "grow" government, but people—not all people, but some people.

The methods of structural analysis employed by Rauch in *Demo-*

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sclerosis cannot begin to explain, for example, why in the 1960's so many well-intentioned people thought that poverty could be eliminated in a "war" that entailed a massive expansion of government. Nor is structural analysis much use when we are confronted with a politician who is not well-intentioned—who likes to wield political power first and foremost for its own sake.

In short, if one fails to fix responsibility for political phenomena, genuine political accountability—the passing of judgment on political ideas and on the politicians who champion them—becomes impossible. Evidently, Jonathan Rauch prefers to preside dispassionately above the fray. This is unfortunate, because it prevents *Demosclerosis* from being better than what it is: an engaging description of the hardened arteries of an aging, high-cholesterol, liberal welfare state.

False Equations

OVERCOMING MATH ANXIETY. BY SHEILA TOBIAS. REVISED EDITION. *Norton. 260 pp. $23.00.*

Reviewed by DAVID GUASPARI

THE reasons for our widespread and embarrassing ignorance of mathematics were aptly described by Jacques Barzun in *Teacher in America* some 50 years ago:

> Early in life, people come to think of themselves as having or not having that mysterious [mathematical] "mind," and until recently I do not believe that anyone dared to dispute its existence. But the belief is a superstition, and one that is largely unproductive. . . . [T]he feeling is given that the whole system dropped down ready-made from the skies, to be used only by born jugglers. This is what paralyzes—with few exceptions—the infant, the adolescent, or the adult who is not a juggler himself.

Barzun elaborated his diagnosis and common-sense prescriptions in eight characteristically brisk pages, and urged us to get on with the practical tasks of teaching. My own experience of teaching mathematics suggests that he is right: there is good reason to expect success when mathematics is properly taught—at the right pace and connected with students' other experience—and when (as one of my colleagues used to say) it is studied with the expectation of pleasure.

Sheila Tobias's *Overcoming Math Anxiety*, first published in 1978, and now reissued in a revised form, puts a contemporary spin on the problem that Barzun addressed a half-century ago. It is a self-help book, of which part is how-to and the rest remakes Barzun's main points with a feminist and therapeutic gloss.

The occasion for the gloss is the persisting gender gap that shows up in classrooms and on standardized tests commonly thought to

DAVID GUASPARI, *a new contributor, is a mathematician and a former teacher who lives in Ithaca, New York.*

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measure mathematical aptitude. Tobias seems to experience those vexing test scores as an affront. The very existence of a research group that "continues to find . . . that . . . the top males *on average* outperform the top females" (emphasis in original) is cause for complaint. Her replies to such provocations pad out the ideological sections of this book with arguments that sometimes lamentably recall Wolfgang Pauli's lapidary dismissal of bad science: "Not even false."

"Since not all math underachievers are women and not all women avoid mathematics," reasons Tobias,

> it is not very likely on the face of it that poor performance in math can result from some genetic or hormonal difference between the sexes. Moreover, no amount of speculation so far has unearthed a "mathematical competency" in some tangible, measurable substance in the body.

The first of these assertions appeals to a principle whose soundness can be tested by applying it to the matter of height. Since not all short people are women and not all women are short, it would be implausible, according to this principle, to attribute differences in average height to genetic or hormonal difference between the sexes. Note that Tobias uses the phrase, "on the face of it," as a kind of rhetorical shoplifting: she walks away from a bad argument but still pockets the goods.

The second assertion has force only if one resorts to caricature, distorting the proposition, "*x* has some biological basis," to mean "there exists some special *x*-causing chemical that possessors of *x* have in unusual abundance." Most of us would agree that Mozart was different from ordinary mortals, and was born that way; but not even the crudest materialist would thereby be committed to believing that Mozart's genius was the result of some special music-chemical or musician-gland, or that his career could be fully explained by his physiological inheritance.

Having insisted that the gender gap in mathematical aptitude cannot be fully explained by "nature"—something no one seriously disputes—Tobias seems to admit only one other contrary possibility: that it can be fully explained by (maladroit) "nurture." Girls, she reports, receive, on average, less encouragement about mathematics and more discouragement than boys do. If that observation seems a little frail to carry the load of indictment with which she freights it, one can always resort, as she does, to rounding up the usual suspects: "Why have you (or most of the men you know) never heard of . . . Sonya Kovalevskaya, who took 19th-century mathematics by storm. . . ?" Alas, Tobias's question could just as well be asked about Hilbert or Gauss.

Finally, Tobias declares an upset victory for what is little more than a truism: "Apart from general intelligence, . . . the most important elements in predicting success at learning math are motivation, temperament, attitude, and interest." But she has already insinuated a great deal more than this, and her explanation continues into the realm of psychopathology. It seems that the origin of "mathophobia" is a culturally conditioned "math avoidance," which can blossom into a syndrome whose "victim" becomes a "math-anxious person," needing "math therapy," possibly through the "intervention" of a "math counselor" or other "expert" in the problems of the "math-disabled."

The discovery of widespread but hitherto unrecognized psychopathologies is, of course, a growth industry, and one would like to think that such claims incur a large burden of proof. In its stead, Tobias documents, at length, some commonplaces of teaching: students profit from discussing their work with friends (and girls often lack "math friends"); students who attribute their failings to lack of effort do better than those who attribute their failings to lack of ability; and so on. It is a slim yield for so much effort.

THE how-to sections of the book are a mixed bag. They reteach simple, if often mystifying, subjects such as fractions and negative numbers, and illustrate doing mathematics by walking through some word problems. Tobias seems unaware of George Polya's classic introduction to mathematical thinking, *How to Solve It* (1945, and still in print). Moreover, her understanding of calculus is unfortunately marginal, and her idiosyncratic take on that subject is unlikely to kindle understanding in many readers.

The most serious failings in these sections of the book are, for want of a better word, cultural. Take, for instance, this howler:

> Socrates's best-known treatise on government . . . starts with an idea, the notion of justice. . . . We might not agree with the definition of justice as it finally emerges from the *Dialogue*, but we have learned a lot about government from the progress of the debate.

Here Tobias misidentifies both the author and the title of what is arguably the most famous and influential philosophical work in the history of Western thought. More depressing, if possible, is that no one seems to have noticed—not the acquaintances of the author who read the manuscript (we know the names of some, from their endorsements on the jacket and contributions to the text), or the editors at Norton (who let it pass in the first edition, too), or a decade-and-a-half's worth of presumably grateful readers.

The problem goes deeper than ignorance or complacency. Thus, in a motivational pep talk, Tobias recommends mathematics solely as a booster to one's prospects for success in the world of affairs, showing no grasp of what it might mean to take possession of so remarkable an intellectual instrument: a body of deductively organized knowledge by which significant, remote, and surprising consequences can be rigorously developed from simple principles.

The wonder inspired by the power of mathematical knowledge has played a remarkable role in the Western tradition—think of Plato, Descartes, Galileo, Newton, Kant. Jacques Barzun recalls the event that marked Thomas Hobbes's "philosophical awakening": a chance look at a copy of Euclid that astonished the middle-aged

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Hobbes into exclaiming, "This can't be true!"

Our students, of any age, are entitled to that astonishment. But who will teach the teachers? Not all know the value of what they claim to teach, or of the tradition it comes from, and the damage from *those* failings cannot be measured by standardized tests alone.

The Bad Earth

THE PLUM IN THE GOLDEN VASE, OR *Chin P'ing Mei*. VOL. I: THE GATHERING. TRANSLATED BY DAVID TOD ROY. *Princeton University Press. 610 pp. $39.50.*

Reviewed by CHARLES HORNER

IN CHINA, where the written word has had great authority and inherited classics have had a powerful cultural role, there is a two-part literary canon, each defined by the language in which it is written. One is the literary language of China, and the other the vernacular.

Although very closely related, the literary and vernacular languages are nonetheless distinct. Literary or classical Chinese was used for the writing of history, philosophy, and other learned matters, and for keeping official records; though the language was not spoken, its ideographs were also used through the ages to record ordinary speech.

Today, however, it is the vernacular which is used for all writing. But even before the 20th century, Chinese writers had produced a vast literature in "plain speech," for the vernacular was itself a literary language used for narrative and drama. Strictly speaking, such writings were déclassé, even though they were most often composed by and for what we would call a cultural elite. But many also became classics in their own right, enormously popular and thoroughly beloved across the generations.

The Plum in the Golden Vase, a racy narrative masterpiece of the late 16th century—a novel, for all intents and purposes—is such a work. Its anonymous author remains unknown to this day, but clearly he was a man of sophistication, erudition, and creative genius. His story runs to 100 chapters—thousands of pages in the original—and the translation undertaken by David Tod Roy of the University of Chicago, who began work on it over twenty years ago, will eventually fill five hefty tomes.

Even in the twenty chapters that comprise Roy's first volume, one sees why the job of rendering a book at once subtly intricate and blatantly graphic should have become the labor of decades. But what Roy has already accomplished is enough to establish his translation as definitive; no one in the foreseeable future will even attempt to supplant it. By the time Roy is finished, he will rank with James Legge, Herbert Giles, and Arthur Waley among the great presenters in English of the Chinese canon.

One of the challenges of this novel has to do with its reliance on a variety of literary forms; it is filled with songs, poems, and snatches of drama. Then, too, in its references to history and politics, it betrays a near-encyclopedic command of almost every aspect of Chinese history and culture over the two millennia prior to its completion. Though writing a work of "popular" fiction, the author obviously assumed that at least some of his readers would be well-educated. What they knew, Roy recreates for us in his notes, where he has traced the origins of seemingly every reference and device in the book. Many of these might have been recognizable to an educated Chinese of the late 16th century (though somehow one doubts even this), but they would certainly escape comprehension by even a knowledgeable non-Chinese reader.

Roy's mastery reflects not only his own vast learning and prodigious personal energy but is also the culmination of an enterprise in which many people have participated across many years. Early in this century, Chinese reformers

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began to call for the rejection of the "dead" classical language. They claimed it embodied worn-out ideas, and that its style and conventions were, in any event, simply too difficult for ordinary people to master. In urging the adoption of plain speech as the sole medium of written expression, these modern-minded Chinese also elevated the academic standing of traditional vernacular literature; they urged that it be studied, not least so that a new literature adhering to the highest standards of the vernacular form would be able to reach and impress the millions who had already demonstrated their enthusiasm for the older exemplars of the genre.

Meanwhile, the West was also becoming more familiar with Chinese vernacular literature through some widely noticed, though partial, translations. In what is now the third generation of this revival, Roy and a number of his contemporaries have added another element, namely, the rediscovery of centuries-old Chinese literary criticism. This has proved an important foundation for a great deal of scholarly work over the past two decades, especially that of Andrew Plaks, our country's outstanding China literary historian and critic.

Roy's translation, a capstone to these efforts, does more than showcase the literary merits of an old Chinese book; it also sketches the moral topography of another culture. His reading of *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, which follows a traditional one, calls our attention to the didactic elements embedded in the novel's dazzling literary displays.

Ostensibly, this novel tells the story of the fate of one man and his household. The central figure is a rich dealer in Chinese *materia medica*, well-connected in local society, tied in somewhat to the capital, and head of a domestic establishment of several wives, many concubines, and numerous relatives and servants. He is also a man of voracious sexual appetite; the descriptions of his activities in this realm are what have given the novel its scandalous reputation.

But what begins as social comedy, the better to lure us into a seemingly endless narrative, soon enough transforms itself into a grotesquery. The protagonist's innocuous carousing and whoring give way to less playful dissipation and perversion, even to incest. Ever in search of new thrills, he eventually succumbs in an ugly way to his compulsions, and his household thereafter disintegrates.

For the modern reader, this book offers a fascinating catalogue of the material artifacts of old Chinese life, describing in illuminating detail the architecture, festivals, court cases, food, clothing, furnishings—and even the sex aids—of a bygone age, in settings that range from the local whorehouse to the imperial court. But it is also, among other things, a sustained reflection on the evanescence of material well-being, a pungent satire on manners and morals, and a pointed critique of the values of its time and place.

By means of the principal narrative, and through a welter of asides and digressions, the author of *The Plum in the Golden Vase* leads us to an understanding of what ails this particular dysfunctional household. It is that the traditional relationships, the ones laid down in ancient times, have become woefully out of joint. Even the most elemental relations—between husband and wife, between father and child—have decomposed. Nor can the inevitable consequences be confined within the walls of the household. Instead, our attention is directed to a parallel decomposition, extending to the chambers of the local magistrate and the court of the Emperor himself.

In short, we are in the hands here of a rather stern moralist, one who is deeply conscious of the political, social, and, ultimately, spiritual decay of his own time (though by convention the book is set centuries prior), and who brings into play every literary device at his command—and he has many—in order to confront his readers with the rot he describes.

Not surprisingly, considering the novel's extraordinary breadth, Western readers have likened *The Plum in the Golden Vase* to the work of writers as disparate as Dickens, Joyce, and Nabokov. Yet care is required in drawing such correspondences—just as care is required in drawing analogies between the decay in that time and the decay in our own. As a good Confucian, our novelist decries the arbitrary and corrupt exercise of power. But he does not find any remedy for tyranny in private pursuits. It is hard to imagine, in particular, that he would regard the free-fire capitalism of the contemporary Chinese metropolis, or the American one for that matter, as an edifying alternative.

Still, there are enduring lessons to be drawn from this book, and the way that it has come to appear in a full English translation. When David Roy began his project a quarter-century ago, it was accepted as a matter of course that the task of understanding an exotic and complex culture like China's required unremitting labor and endless patience. The literary sensibility and careful scholarship exemplified by Roy hark back to that time. They are as different as can be imagined from the "multiculturalism" of today, in which political pandering competes with intellectual inanition for hegemony over the scholarly world. In contemplating both *The Plum in the Golden Vase* and Roy's tremendous achievement in translating it, our own cultural disorientation and civic decline are brought into unexpectedly sharp perspective.

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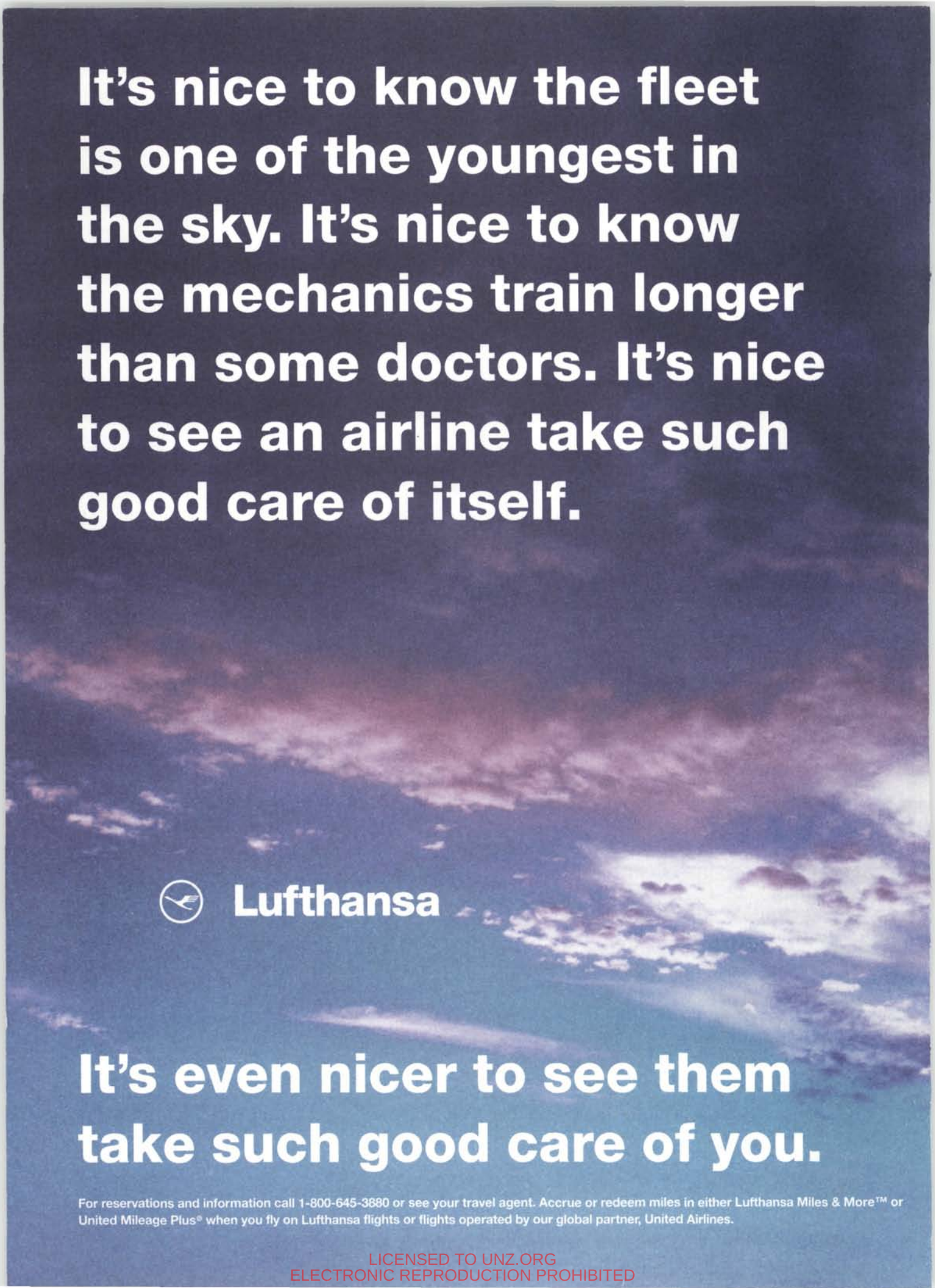
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